Chronicles

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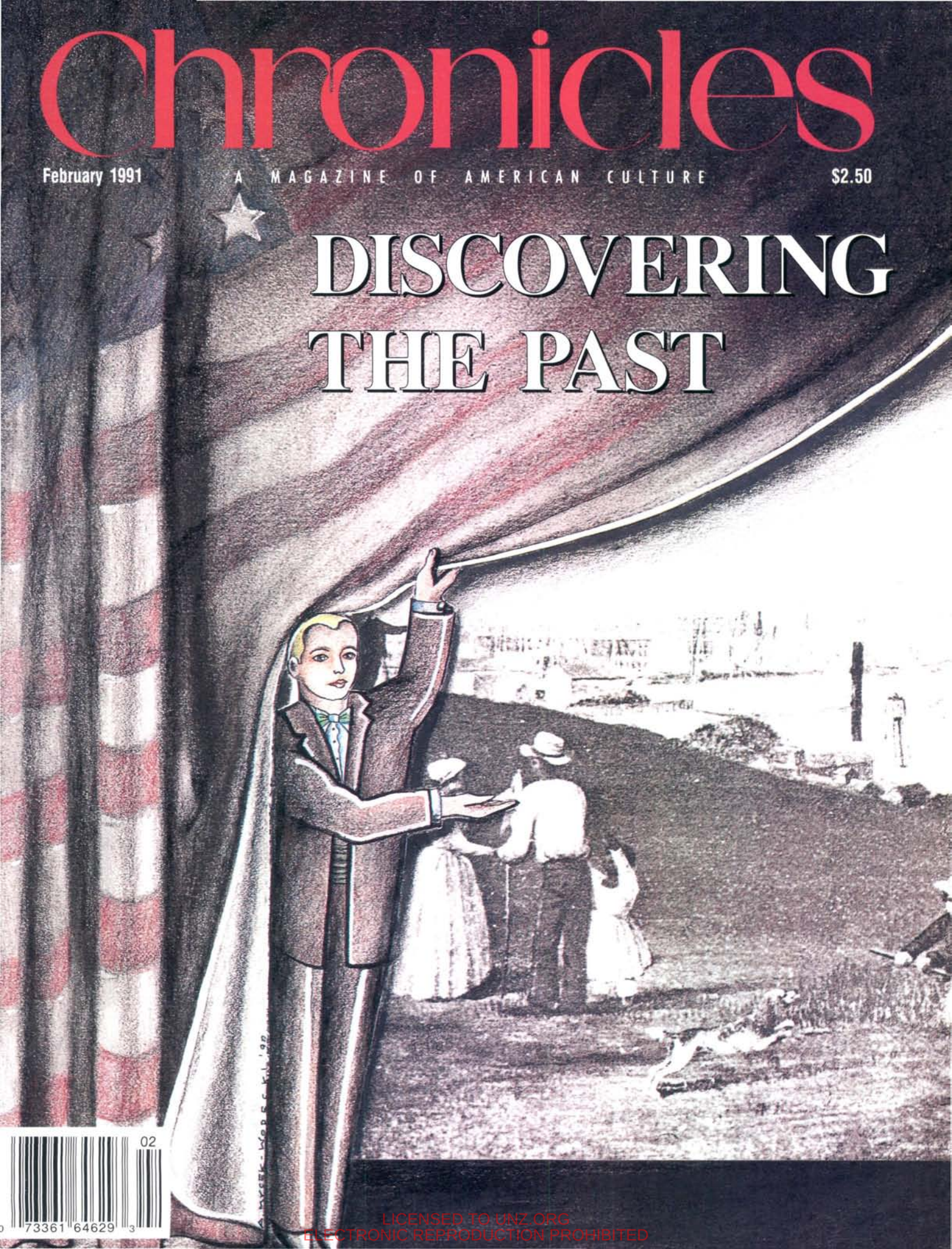
DISCOVERING THE PAST



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Ludwig von Mises, 1881 - 1973

"In my classes at Harvard, the answer is always more government. But not at the Mises University!" —*Liam Ford, Harvard University*

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 15, No. 2 February 1991

On 'Good News'

The message of the thoughtful and beautifully written articles in *Chronicles* (December 1990) on "good news" seems to be this: things are very bad and bound to get worse, but if you resign yourself to the inevitable and concentrate on family and friends you may, with God's help, get through it. If this is "good news," I wonder what my *Chronicles* friends would consider a disaster.

As a New Yorker born and bred, the Stoic route of quiet resignation is simply not for me. But neither is it quite the New Yorker's way to rage, rage against the dying of the light, although that's a lot more like it. The true New Yorker faces the situation with a quip, a wisecrack, with high wit; in short, he believes in his bones that it is better to laugh than to cry. And so I don't resent Chilton Williamson ("Kick It As It Lays") when he says that the good news is that everyone now recognizes that New York has become a zoo without bars, for every sane New Yorker agrees. He knows the problem as well as, and even more than, any outside observer.

But New York was not always thus. New York was once a wonderful, vibrant, exciting city; it was never a Melting Pot, but it *was*, in many ways, in Mayor Dinkins' notorious phrase, a "gorgeous mosaic." In the 1920's and 1930's, many families habitually slept in Central Park on hot summer nights, even at the Harlem end. In the 1940's, I and many other whites used to go to the famed Apollo Theater in Harlem to hear singers like Pearl Bailey and to watch vaudeville acts, and none of the whites ever felt a trace of fear. The streets, if not exactly clean, were not the garbage-strewn cesspools that they are today.

The streets, in fact, were friendly and colorful and not menacing; you could be a Walker in the City and remain hassle-free. There were plenty of eccentrics, but they were harmless and fun. Idealists on soapboxes were everywhere, and Columbus Circle was New York's answer to Hyde Park. Ideologies ranged across the spectrum, from Marxist sects to village Hayekians, convinced that the problem was the "greed and grab" of politicians and special interest groups. There was a sweet innocence about them all. There were no "homeless" then, even in the midst of the Great Depression. There were a few bums and winos, and if friends from out-of-town were anxious to see them you could take them downtown to The Bowery, where the bums hung out amidst bars and flophouses. The Bowery was in essence a red-light district for the bum population.

How was the peace so well maintained? Simply that if the cops caught a bum outside the confines of The Bowery, he was unceremoniously picked up and hustled down there, the cops making it clear in no uncertain terms, free of the modern Problems of Communication, that they better not catch said bum outside The Bowery ever again. If anyone had raised the point that bums had a "constitutional right" to clutter the streets and hassle innocent citizens for money, he would have been dismissed as insane.

And how come there were no muggers? The crime theorists among Chicago School economists emphasize that to deter crime, punishment must be certain and severe. But they miss the key point. In Austrian School lingo, muggers have a very high "time preference," that is, their range of foresight is about one half-hour, so they don't really care about punishment after a couple of years of indictment and trial. To deter crime, punishment must be *immediate*, and the cops in those days, steeped in such wisdom and patrolling the beat, were ready to administer such condign punishment. It was well known that if the cops spotted a mugger, the mugger's ride to the station and his sojourn in the station house would be extremely unpleasant. It was that prospect of immediate retribution that kept what New Yorkers these days refer to as "the animals" in severe check.

So New York is going down the drain fast. But the more interesting

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question is, what can be done about it? I know about the deeper causes, the cultural-ethnic problems and the breakdown of self-discipline and family values. But as a New Yorker, I'm looking for a quicker fix, and as a libertarian I'm trained to look to government as both the problem and the solution. Government as the problem is the welfare state, which creates massive dependency over the generations, and which has destroyed family discipline. But also government as the problem is its egregious failure to do the one thing for which organized violence is suitable: defending persons and property from assault. And since the government owns the streets, it has the responsibility to run those streets in a manner fit for human existence: in short, to restore the Bowery-only system, and to bring back not only the cop on the beat, but also his power to administer instant retribution, and to hell with the ACLU. And also to restore to New Yorkers the legal right to carry hatpins, mace, guns, or any other weapon necessary to defend themselves and other innocents against assault.

After only months in office, and amidst a summer of unprecedented violence in New York, Mayor Dinkins had the gall to exhort its citizens to abandon their fear of the streets, to get out from behind their quadruple-locked and bolted doors, and to surge forth, helpless and disarmed, to take the streets back from the criminals. When the New York establishment learns, or is made to learn by public outcry, that this is what cops are supposed to be for, perhaps the Big Apple can be redeemed at last.

And, besides, *Chronicles* editors are mainly backcountry Southern Borderers (as they are called by historian David Hackett Fischer), hailing originally from the troubled borders of England and Scotland. And Borderers, embodied in such great American leaders as Patrick Henry, Andrew Jackson, and John C. Calhoun, have long been noted for their spunk. Quiet resignation, bless them, has never been one of their virtues.

—*Murray N. Rothbard*
Las Vegas, NV

The December issue contained the following statements: the Québécois are "absolutely right to be concerned about the threat to their culture from the surrounding Anglophone world" (John Shelton Reed, "What I Did on My Vacation"); "as we have seen most recently in the flare-up over Quebec and its relations to Canada, it makes a big difference to everyone *which language* is used in courts, schools, and street signs . . . Sowell's blind spot on the language question . . . " (Murray N. Rothbard, "Affirmative Scholarship").

Thomas Sowell, however, went to the heart of the matter: Quebec is an example of affirmative action. In fact, the French Language Board (its inspectors are nicknamed "Tongue Troopers") copies its "persuasion" procedures from affirmative action manuals obtained from U.S. Federal agencies. Montreal's English hospitals, which came under the hegemony of the provincial government when Canada adopted its national health system, are supported by the English-speaking population. When French became the sole official language of Quebec, the hospitals learned that it would no longer be acceptable to communicate with the government in English and that it would be advisable to phase out the English-speaking employees and replace them with persons "sufficiently fluent" in French.

The inspectors peruse the list of employees and nod agreeably when they see a French-Canadian name, a tricky business sometimes as many French Canadians have Anglo surnames, and the first name may be, for example, Robert, which is the same in both languages. By now, virtually all the administrative jobs in the English hospitals are occupied by French Canadians. Only the medical work is carried on, sometimes uneasily, in English. The English banks kill two affirmative action birds with one stone by employing French-Canadian women as branch managers.

Further evidence against Rothbard's and Reed's contention that the Quebec authorities are only protecting their local majority culture is the ruthless scrapping of traditional French-Canadian institutions: instead we have a civil marriage, legalized divorce, atheism and Marxism in the schools, and a phasing out of the handling of family legal and property matters by a peculiarly French profession known as *notaires*. Imminent legal changes favor instead the Anglo-Saxon adversarial settlement of civil disputes, handled by attorneys.

If there were genuine concern for the preservation of the French language, there would be no separatism, since the boundaries of Quebec have not the slightest bearing on the subject. The only culture shock crossing from Quebec into either of its neighboring provinces is the change of license plates.

But the borders of Canada have everything to do with preservation of French, as recently reiterated by Jean Chrétien, leader of the Federal Liberty Party. The language survives and even grows in parts of Canada hundreds of miles from Quebec, but it is dead just over the nearby U.S. border, even where people watch Montreal television, fly to U.S. destinations from Montreal's airport, dine out in Montreal's fine French restaurants (Reed did manage to get one thing right), and reside in towns, like Winooski, Vermont, that are ethnically French Canadian. The parish church of St. Pierre, in Plattsburgh, New York, seventy miles south of here, was renamed "St. Peter" some years ago.

I don't wish it on you, but you will understand better when certain cities and even regions of the United States are declared "African-American" amid suitable changes of name (it has already been proposed that New York become "Martin Luther King City") with undreamt-of changes to follow. Montreal is a French city only in the same way that Detroit or Atlanta are African-American cities. Lincoln (Avenue or whatever)—yes, Lincoln—would become Jesse Jackson Avenue just as Dorchester Boulevard in Montreal became Boul. René-Lévesque.

Rothbard has apparently never been to Montreal; John Shelton Reed's account of his visit, however, repeats every standard left-wing media myth about the place. He quotes "an Anglo reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation," which is like visiting North Carolina and quoting a reporter for the Charlotte *Observer*.

The CBC reporter wouldn't know, and I wonder if Reed would even want to know, that Jefferson Davis sojourned in Montreal (his daughter at-

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tended Sacred Heart College, still going strong). Apparently two plaques were put up by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to mark the site, ironically on Union Avenue, where Davis lodged with one of Montreal's leading citizens, John Lovell. White leftists and black activists have demanded that the plaques be removed. Only a French plaque remains.

—Lionel Albert
Montreal, Canada

On 'Your Papers, Please'

I don't know who Mr. R. Cort Kirkwood is or what his credentials to write about "law" are. His knee-jerk reaction (Vital Signs, November 1990) to efficiently verifiable identification of applicants for special recognition in the United States today compels me to suppose that they are minimal.

No one suggests that there be any compulsion to carry a card imposed on *every* person found on U.S. territory; what I do insist is that every applicant for a U.S. *privilege* established by law must be positively and promptly identifiable as a person qualified for it. By privilege I mean simply any benefit or penalty for which an identity is listed by the relevant law as a prerequisite. By way of examples, a driver's license, voter registration, passport, Social Security status, eligibility for some jobs. If any of these or any other examples are felt to be ones in which the requirement for identification has been improperly made, let's rewrite the law to eliminate it. Let's not insist that some constitutional right is infringed by effective and inexpensive enforcement of a proper requirement.

—W. Brown Morton, Jr.
Warsaw, VA

Mr. Kirkwood Replies:

I must admit, Mr. W. Brown Morton, Jr. is right in observing that "no one suggests that there be any compulsion to carry a card imposed on *every* person found on U.S. territory." I never said any such thing. What Mr. Morton hasn't discerned from reading the law is that the identification card legislation would require *every* American citizen to carry an unforgeable I.D. card to get any kind of work. Mr. Morton's complaint is with the fatheads in Congress, not with me.

I did not "insist" that "some constitutional right is infringed by effective and inexpensive enforcement of a proper requirement." In fact, I said "effective and inexpensive enforcement"—to use Mr. Morton's words—of existing immigration laws would obviate the need for American citizens to carry identification papers. As I observed in the article, if Congress did its duly appointed job—to protect the lives and property of American citizens—the U.S. Border Patrol would have enough money to do its job without adopting identification cards, fingerprints, and retina scanners to identify Americans like myself, who have paternal roots going back to the military campaigns of George Washington, for the purpose of employment.

—R. Cort Kirkwood

On 'Letter From the Lower Right'

Though John Shelton Reed's December column was engaging and enjoyable, he made a very common error in misstating the old saw about Yanks and Rebs together being invincible. As Mr. Reed put it, "one observer remarked that if he had Confederate cavalry and Union infantry he could whip any army on earth."

The observer in question was North Carolina's own irascible and celebrated Yankee-hater, General Daniel Harvey Hill. On July 1, 1862, at Malvern Hill (presumably no relation), Hill watched Union artillery chew up wave after wave of Confederate infantrymen who had stupidly been ordered to assault dug-in Yankees uphill and across open ground, and who repeatedly did so with a determination equaled only by the Union infantrymen acting under similar orders at Fredericksburg in December of that same year.

Some twenty years after the war, Hill, in a *Century* magazine article titled "McClellan's Change of Base and Malvern Hill," paid justly deserved tribute to the courage and fighting skill of all the men on the field that day by writing, "The battle, with all its melancholy results, proved . . . that the Confederate infantry and Federal artillery, side by side on the same field, need fear no foe on earth."

The statement seems always to be either misquoted or wrongly attributed.

—James Morgan
Martinsburg, WV

Mr. Reed Replies:

Oops. Thanks to Mr. Morgan for setting me straight. Let's hope that Yanks and Rebs, in whatever combination, are still unbeatable. I don't know if our military scares Saddam Hussein, but it sure scares me.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

FILMING AN EXECUTION at San Quentin Prison is what San Francico's KQED has asked the U.S. District Court in California for permission to do: it wants the unedited tape to run nationwide over the Public Broadcasting Service network.

KQED is not doing this merely to get higher audience ratings. It thinks that once people see what an execution is like, support for capital punishment will wane. Michael Schwartz, director of KQED's current affairs department, says, "We want the camera to be a neutral witness. The camera can do what no other medium can do, and that's to bring the viewer to the event in an unmediated way."

True. In turn, KQED will want to show the other side of the story, too. To get the other side, KQED ought to ask various police departments in this country to supply the films they have of the victims of capital crimes. Then

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when there's a showing of an execution, viewers will also see the victim of the crime, say, the mutilated corpse of a rape atrocity or some adolescent whose arms were hacked off, or the scantily clad casualties of the midnight strangler. Take the Willy Horton problem and the many kindhearted people like Michael Dukakis who think criminals shouldn't be put away in some solitary confinement as if they were savage jungle beasts. Why shouldn't KQED show police films of Willy Horton's victims? The camera could show the viewer his crimes in, to use Michael Schwartz's phrase, "an unmediated way."

I'm sure police departments will also supply films to the Public Broadcasting Service network and KQED of a murdered policeman's family mourning their loss. In keeping with KQED's sense of justice and fair play, the station might also want to show the awful condition of criminals who have been sentenced to life imprisonment, paired with, again, films of the victims of these jailed criminals.

KQED's idea to show executions and my idea to show how it all began before the murderer entered the death chamber could be a useful test for the pros and cons of capital punishment. First, you see the decomposing body of a molested six-year-old girl in some thicket being identified by her horror-stricken parents, and then you watch the execution of the convicted murderer. Without emotion you then tell KQED what you think of capital punishment.

It would be particularly valuable to show the victims of mass killers who had been released after serving short prison terms, who then went out and murdered again. The families of the second series of victims might be asked to give their views as the execution proceeded.

Lots of luck, KQED, as you proceed with your noble project.

—*Arnold Beichman*

AMERICAN EDUCATION is today so bureaucratized that every increase in tax monies poured into the system produces less real learning. We now spend approximately 33 percent more in real terms ($5,638) per capita on students in elementary and secondary schools than we did ten years ago, but all valid measures show a decrease in learning with each ratchet-up in tax expenditures. Americans are especially anxious and frightened by our students' plummeting test scores precisely because we are still passionate believers in the value of schooling, and most Americans still believe more money is the answer. But informed observers know this is not so.

Vouchers and tax-deductions for education expenditures are obviously the simplest means, and the most politically acceptable means right now, for beginning a great "restructuring" of American education. Parents can use their tax vouchers or tax deductions to send their children to any school they deem the best. Education entrepreneurs of all kinds, from the dedicated young volunteers who love teaching to high-tech nerds bent on creating "interactive video programs," are paid to produce the greatest possible learning per dollar and the greatest investor satisfaction—that is, happy learners, parents, and taxpayers. The early experiments in vouchers for elementary education have been promising; in fact, even liberal educationists, the descendants of the Great Bureaucratizers, have grudgingly admitted that vouchers work. These people still hope to limit the vouchers to the public system, but they agree that smaller, competing public schools would be more efficient than the present big bureaucracies.

So far, the school voucher movement has focused on de-bureaucratizing neighborhood elementary schools. But the big bureaucracies, the Factories of Education, are not the elementary schools in your average local neighborhood. The real Frankensteins of Education are our colossal state universities and state colleges. There are no elementary school campuses with ten thousand students milling around in anonymous herds, but there are scores of these colossal state universities processing millions of alienated students. Almost all private universities limit class sizes to from several hundred to several thousand students. Anything beyond that is found to breed unhappy customers who take their tuition money elsewhere. But the bureaucrats of the state universities have continued to build ever more colossal centers for herding ever more unhappy students who learn less and less for ever more tax dollars.

Vouchers and tax credits are ideally suited for higher education. College students would have every incentive to seek out the schools that give them the best return for their vouchers and family tax-credits. The more bureaucratic reformers have already adopted a mass of student tests to hold schools accountable for their expenditures of tax dollars at lower levels, and these tests could be adapted for universities. Any student who falls below a certain academic level would simply lose his vouchers, and any institution with aggregate student scores below a minimal level would lose its accreditation to receive vouchers.

Many other incentives could be built into such a system. Students could be limited to a certain lifetime amount of vouchers, so they would have an incentive to find the place where they could get the maximum learning for the minimum cost. A certain minimum number of vouchers could be limited to general education requirements, which would probably breed an explosion of small private colleges, and others could be used for more specialized career training. If students were allowed to combine their specialized education vouchers with, say, corporate-sponsored training programs, then employers would have an incentive to give more matching funds for education.

Under a voucher system, college students would no longer be forced to "regurgitate" whatever values and ideological "spins" their state Education Factories embrace. Studies, such as the Carnegie Foundation's *The Condition of the Professoriate*, show that 70 percent of professors in the humanities and social sciences are self-labeled liberals. Since the majority of conservatives seem to be segregated into the schools in the South and Southwest, most students in this country find themselves subjected to the liberal ideology of these state Factories. Vouchers and tax credits, however, would end this indoctrination by the simple device of granting students "freedom of choice," which surely no honest liberal could oppose.

Some citizens might worry that this new system of education would under-

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mine research, since one of the ostensive justifications for the Factories is that they allow their faculties time to do research and publish. But only a small number of the highly paid, tenured faculty at American universities publish anything. In the vast majority of Factories the unwritten rule for the highest paid faculty is "Don't publish and get rich." Since they also teach less and less, getting paid more and more in real terms for less and less work of any kind, they actually constitute monopolists happy to continue milking the public.

The search for truth and wisdom is the highest and most noble human pursuit, and there are many of us who continue in the quest. But most students and faculty members have been so demoralized by the bureaucratization of education that they laugh in derision at the very idea of pursuing knowledge. The great mass of college students now long only to "escape to the real world."

In his last article, the late A. Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale, noted, "I have never met a parent who has said to me, 'I'm really delighted with the quality of teaching, the sense of values, the direction the students get.'" I rest my case. Vouchers and tax credits will not usher in the promised land, nor will they transform the quad at State U. into the Lyceum. But they surely will bring an end to the Education Factories.

—*Jack D. Douglas*

THE NEA'S FUTURE has now been decided, the decision is by consensus, and the conservative position has prevailed. Chairman John Frohnmayer said so in a little-noticed appearance at the Newsmakers Breakfast at the National Press Club last September 17. Here is what he said: First, "I have argued all along that internal management reform and sensitivity to taxpayers will be the remedy of our problems." Translation: the artists' panels will no longer dictate who gets what. Taxpayers' opinion (read: people revolted by taxpayers' subsidies to political or obscene or bigoted or blasphemous art) will now make a difference.

Second, "Peer panel review system: a lay person now sits on each panel, that is, someone with a profound interest in the arts who does not make their [*sic*] living through the arts. We also recognized that the panels of citizen-experts had become, in their own eyes and in the eyes of many artists, infallible judges whose recommendations should not be questioned by either the National Council or the Chairperson [of the NEA]. That had to change, and the new attitude is a foundation for accountability in the future." Translation: the same thing again. The artists' panels will no longer dictate who gets what. Taxpayers' opinion will now make a difference.

Third, the "Endowment must reaffirm that it is for all the American people, rather than looking solely to the arts community. It is a question of finding a balance between the need for freedom of artistic expression and public accountability." Translation: the same thing a third time.

So much for a now-repudiated past. What about the future? Here the chairman defines an Endowment that will simply keep out of the public eye. It will "emphasize arts education," "emphasize delivery of arts to our multicultural and rural communities," "emphasize the international activities of this agency," and "maintain, strengthen, and enhance our core institutions which are both the repositories of our past artistic genius and in many ways the hope for our future. Here I mean our museums, symphonies, theaters, operas, and all other major artistic groups." Translation: grants will mostly go to institutions, *e.g.*, schools, community organizations, international exhibitions, museums, and theaters, which can be trusted not to blow up Pittsburgh, and not so much to individual artists, who cannot be trusted.

The chairman's reiteration of the magic words conservatives have heard so little of in the past 18 months—"accountability," "taxpayer," "no longer solely for the arts community"—tells us that the NEA has finally capitulated to what I regard as good sense. It aims at a long future as a federal agency devoted to building audiences for the arts and institutions for the arts—but not financing the careers of artists. So no more politics in the guise of "art"; no more thousands of dollars of grants for bottles of urine; no more performance art that replaces Shakespeare with chocolate-covered shriekers; no more hysteria about censorship; and no more federal subsidies to the sectarian left.

The radicals of the art world get sizzle: no restrictive language governing the content of art supported by tax money. The great center position gets the steak: an Endowment that will not spend federal funds for left-wing propaganda masquerading as "art." The other side has lost, and lost big.

—*Jacob Neusner*

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

After centuries of delusion that white people ever accomplished anything worth doing, Euro-Americans are finally learning to grapple with just how worthless they really are. Last November, a conference of the Brahmins of "Afrocentrism" in Atlanta devoted all of a weekend to expounding the much-trumpeted insights that it was really Africans who built the pyramids, invented philosophy and mathematics, discovered America, and founded Judaism and Christianity (both Moses and Jesus were "African-Americans," you see).

Not only the first human beings but also the first languages were African, too, and so were Egyptians Nefertiti and King Tut, the largely Macedonian Cleopatra, and even the Greek slave Aesop, who, as far as I know, has never before been claimed by much of anyone except Walt Disney.

The world gapes in wonder at these revelations, before which the technology of space travel and TV dinners shrinks (both of these also were probably African in origin). Meanwhile, African-American civilization continues to outpace the brutish Euros. Last October 2 Live Crew won vindication in the courts for its garbage-box rap lyrics when its white lawyers argued that the

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group's "music" derived from the black culture of the ghetto. In November an even greater African-American peak was scaled with the news that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. pilfered significant portions of his doctoral dissertation.

The latter discovery might seem to cast a shadow over the thriving industry of discrediting Euro-American history and culture and weaving a new mythology of racial consciousness that Alfred Rosenberg would have envied. But the rationalizations for King's academic shenanigans with the typewriter were ready to hand.

First, the plagiarism was minimized by those who discovered it. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that at the Martin Luther King Papers Project at Stanford University, director Clayborne Carson asked that staff members not use the word "plagiarism" when talking about what they had found. This led to wiseacre code about "the P word," but it didn't prevent one of the project's interns, who had not yet been brainwashed in the labyrinthine reasoning of Afrocentrists, from collapsing into tears.

Then there's the "so-what" response, articulated by, among others, journalist Clarence Page, who is usually above such extenuations. "As one who exalts Dr. King for the wisdom and courage he showed long after his student days," wrote Mr. Page, "I reacted to this latest flap with a shrug of the shoulders and a hearty 'So what?'" But the shoulder-shrug defense seemed a little premature when hardly a soul had yet suggested any negative implications of King's loose-fingered scholarship.

By far the most fascinating excuse, however, was the elaborate syllogism constructed by the hard-core Afrocentrists and those who toddle after them. Scholar Keith Miller, who is writing a monograph that reportedly will show that King also lifted lots of other people's writing for his books *Stride Toward Freedom* and *Strength to Love* as well as for his *Letter From the Birmingham Jail*, says that King was a past master at what Mr. Miller calls "voice merging."

"Voice merging," says the *Journal*, is the art of "blending other people's words" with one's own, an art form that truly seems to be a genuine African-American invention. When white boys merge voices, it's just plain plagiarism, and they lose their jobs, get the boot from graduate school, and wind up chairing Senate committees.

In an article published last year, Mr. Miller expands on this novel concept of the merged voice while evaluating King's habit of "borrowing" language from other people without giving proper credit. "With respect to King's language during his public career, he did absolutely nothing wrong," says Mr. Miller. "He was trained in the black folk pulpit, which is an oral tradition. In this tradition, language was seen as a common treasure, not private property. His sense of language comes out of that tradition, not out of his academic training."

That's all very well, but it still means, even if it's true, that the language commonly attributed to King may not have been his and that insofar as we evaluate his achievements on the basis of his command of language and his oratory, those achievements are now diminished. Moreover, the idea of "borrowing" language is itself interesting. Did King plan to give the language back later on?

But what is most intriguing about the "voice merging" defense is that it strides directly out of the "different cultural standards" line of reasoning that underlies the whole concept of Afrocentrism. One of the hidden purposes of Afrocentrism as an ideology, and of the whole racism racket by which traditional values are challenged as racially biased, is to concoct justifications for the lackluster performance of blacks in the United States. Plagiarism is OK, this reasoning holds, because it's part of African-American culture.

Similarly, last year at the University of Virginia, black students questioned the legitimacy of the school's traditional honor code by claiming it was inherently racist. Though blacks constitute only 9 percent of the student body at U.Va., 27 percent of the honor code cases investigated in 1988 and 1989 involved blacks, and 75 percent of the black students tried for honor violations were convicted, as opposed to 30 percent of the whites who went to trial. The Afrocentrist argument is that not only are the trials biased but also that the code itself imposes white standards by which blacks can't be fairly judged.

The logical implication of that argument is in fact racial separatism such as both Louis Farrakhan and Tom Metzger support, and the *New York Times* reports that persistent poor black performance in schools is instigating calls for separate educational facilities for black students. "Today," says the *Times*, "the impetus for more equal but separate education is largely from blacks themselves," a plan that Dr. Kenneth Clark, who spent his life trying to end school segregation, says is "outrageous . . . a continuation of the whole segregation nonsense." The ultimate rationalization, of course, is the motto, "It's a black thing. You wouldn't understand"—a slogan that paralyzes serious discussion and helps lock blacks into a plantation mentality that docilely accepts the pornographic bullwhip of 2 Live Crew and the shackles of plagiarism dressed up as real scholarship.

Afrocentrism offers sophomorically fraudulent and bloated claims of racial greatness that tell us nothing authentic about real African and black American history and culture and in fact often trivializes them. Bragging that insignificant historical figures like Nefertiti and King Tut were black is rather like boasting that Millard Fillmore and his mother were white, and trying to fabricate a fake "Afrocentric" history is no less degrading than Jimmy the Greek's discussion of the comparative racial anatomy of thighs.

Moreover, by pretending that Africans invented everything from pyramids to the Pythagorean theorem, Afrocentrists simply engage in an act of civilizational plagiarism. Champions of a real and distinctive African civilization would hold up its own unique achievements, not merely copy off of the desks of the Europeans sitting next to them.

Like everyone else, black Americans have a history and a culture and a right to be proud of them, but they have no right to manufacture new myths that falsify and degrade their own and other peoples' pasts. When the Afrocentrist lobby learns that only the truth will make them free, they will give up their pathetic fables, forget about cooking up excuses for themselves, and let the unmerged voices of their people speak clearly and honestly and without the cant of propaganda and delusion.

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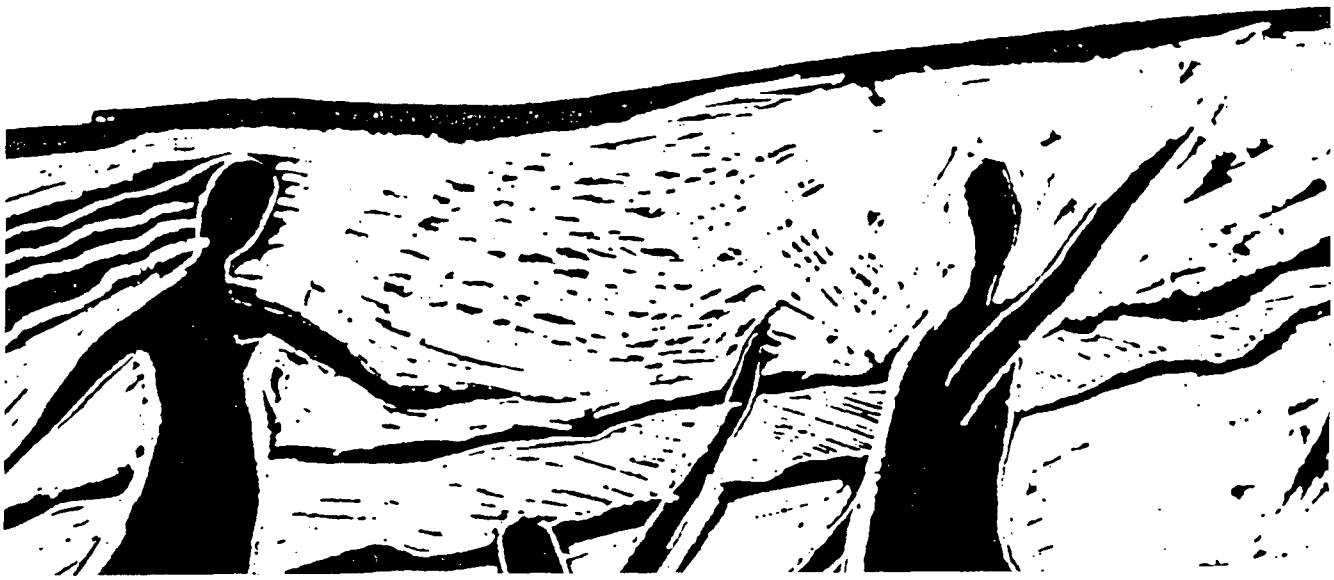

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

What Gift?

by Charles Causley

I am a Cornishman, a Celt, born in the far southwest of England. Apart from the six years of the Second World War and my time as a student at a college of education, I have lived the whole of my life not only in the small market-town of Launceston, where I was born, but also within the same parish.

Cornwall is a granite country, thrusting itself out into the Atlantic, an almost-island separated from the rest of England by the boundary line of the River Tamar. To this day, traveling across the river into Devonshire, there are those who still speak of going to England.

When the Normans arrived in Launceston soon after the great invasion of 1066, they built a tall stone castle and walled the town. Sensibly, they ventured no further into the turbulent west. As a young child, then, growing up in the 1920's, my little town of four to five thousand inhabitants was a microcosm of the whole world. For me, a child of working-class parents, nowhere else existed. London was an impossibly distant city. It might have been on the moon.

But what was sown in my mind and imagination was an almost overpowering sense of the past. Cornwall is a country rich in myth and legend. To me, every other farm and field, stream and well, every stretch of moorland with its mysterious piles of sculpted stone — sculpted by whom? — had, and has, its own history or fiction or fable. The Cornish were, and are, great storytellers, and I now see that I was lucky in my teachers and in my tellers of hearthside tales.

I was an only child. My father, a young soldier-volunteer in France in the First World War, had returned a hopeless invalid and died in 1924, when I was seven. I remember little of him. But rereading my work across the years, I see that — without always being entirely conscious of what I was doing at the time — I have made various attempts to rediscover him, to recreate him. He appears, if not in the text, in the subtext of what I write. I'll give you an example.

Ten years — "ten feasts of fire" — after the end of World War II, and after my own naval service had ended, I visited for the first time Normandy, in northern France. Here some of the bitterest fighting had taken place after the D-Day landings. And here, too, were ancient fortified towns the image of my very own. At Bayeux, I came upon my first British War Cemetery. It was neatly laid out, in that then rather ragged Norman farming landscape, in the form of an English garden. Here is what I wrote.

I walked where in their talking graves
And shirts of earth five thousand lay,
When history with ten feasts of fire
Had eaten the red air away.

"I am Christ's boy," I cried. "I bear
In iron hands the bread, the fishes.
I hang with honey and with rose
This tidy wreck of all your wishes.

"On your geometry of sleep
The chestnut and the fir-tree fly,

Charles Causley is the author of over thirty books of prose and poetry including, most recently, Secret Destinations: Selected Poems 1977-88 *(David R. Godine). He was the 1990 recipient of The Ingersoll Foundation's T.S. Eliot Award, for which this was his acceptance speech. He lives in Launceston, Cornwall.*

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And lavender and marguerite
Forge with their flowers an English sky.

"Turn now towards the belling town
Your jigsaws of impossible bone,
And rising read your rank of snow
Accurate as death upon the stone."

About your easy heads my prayers
I said with syllables of clay.
"What gift," I asked, "shall I bring now
Before I weep and walk away?"

Take, they replied, *the oak and laurel.*
Take our fortune of tears and live
Like a spendthrift lover. All we ask
Is the one gift you cannot give.

As a small boy, entranced by the written word, I never had the slightest desire to drive a locomotive, pilot an aircraft, captain a ship. The supreme achievement seemed to me to be that of one who had written a book: any kind of book. All through my teenage years I struggled with the short story, the novel, the play, the poem. I was like the man in the story who leapt on his horse and tried to ride off in all directions. Another difficulty lay in finding something to write about. I looked at the circumstance of my small-town rural life and decided, with supreme snobbishness, that it didn't match up to my literary ambitions. Unfailingly, I wrote about worlds I had never known. Poetry — and poetry was becoming my principal interest — was away and somewhere else. Nobody told me that the raw material of poetry, like the raw material of all art, resides quite simply under one's nose. Certainly, this didn't become plain to me until my experience of the Second World War.

Poets are often asked, in a dauntingly high-flown phrase, how and when they are "inspired." For myself, too often at such moments a deeply superstitious Celt, this is a word best avoided. If you ask me why I write, I would say that I write because I must. It's a compulsion, and — with luck — a means of resolving inner conflict. Poetry, for me, has been a particular form of autobiography. The general theme of one's work becomes self-evident, I think, in its early written stages, but the subjects may be many and various. And there's a certain danger in a too-active search for a subject. In my experience, a subject consciously sought is rarely found. It was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who warned us, wisely, that the writer's greatest danger is impatience. "We must be right by nature," says Coleridge, "so that good thoughts may come before us like free children of God and say *Here we are.*"

Again on a visit to France, to Normandy, wandering in a great gloomy cathedral, I came quite unexpectedly on a short prose inscription, dated 1762, on a stone crucifix. I scribbled down a rough translation; later found myself almost inexplicably haunted by it. But the prose I found flat and unsatisfying, and I couldn't rest until I had tried to develop it into a formal poem, a sonnet, in English. Here it is.

I am the great sun, but you do not see me,
I am your husband, but you turn away.
I am the captive, but you do not free me,
I am the captain you will not obey.

I am the truth, but you will not believe me,
I am the city where you will not stay.
I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me,
I am that God to whom you will not pray.

I am your counsel, but you do not hear me,
I am the lover whom you will betray.
I am the victor, but you do not cheer me,
I am the holy dove whom you will slay.

I am your life, but if you will not name me,
Seal up your soul with tears, and never blame me.

I think it important always to remember that there is — or that there should be — more to a poem than what actually lies on the page. We must be sensitive to its resonances, its intimations, its reverberations. All poetry is magic. It is a spell against insensitivity, failure of imagination, ignorance and barbarism. We may return to a masterpiece again and again — however familiar we may consider it to be — always for refreshment, always to discover something new. Poems are not clocks. If we dismantle them, they may give no reason at all why they tick, nor should they. For it's a fact of their existence that all genuine works of art should keep some of their secrets in order that they may go on giving out what the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca called *sonidos negros* — black sounds. These black sounds, he said, and said rightly, accompany all imaginative creations whether in words or paint, music or stone.

Given the manner and place of my background, perhaps it was inevitable that when I came to write I should find myself at work in the central traditions of verse in English. The set form, the lyric, the narrative poem, the ballad and the rest have always held a strong attraction for me. And it is the subject that must dictate the particular form — the delicate and difficult choice inherent in deciding on the architecture of each individual poem. Whether the final piece of work is in rhyme or is in free verse, my intention has always been simply to match as best I can the form with the content.

The most valuable of anthologies, naturally, is the one each of us carries in our head. For myself, I find it difficult to remember a poem or a fragment of a poem without the rhythm of a line or the lifebelt of a rhyme for the drowning memory to hook on to. As for the rhyme itself — that dangerous creature — it must never be, so to speak, merely the chime but also the exact and only word appropriate to the occasion: a nice problem always for the writer.

Because I have spent most of my life virtually on the same spot, I think it is true that I have little difficulty in identifying my roots — though it was not until a seven-year absence following 1940 that it was borne in on me just how deep those roots are. But living for great lengths of time as part of the same community presents its own difficulties. An over-familiarity is all too prone to blur and blunt the senses. And one also tends, as often as not, to look backwards in time. But here, the last poem in my most recent collection,

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"Eden Rock," is a look forwards.

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond
Eden Rock:
My father, twenty-five, in the same suit
Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack
Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress
Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,
Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.
Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight
From an old H.P. sauce-bottle, a screw
Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out
The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by three suns.
My mother shades her eyes and looks my way
Over the drifted stream. My father spins
A stone along the water. Leisurely,
They beckon to me from the other bank.
I hear them call, "See where the stream-path is!
Crossing is not as hard as you might think."

I had not thought that it would be like this.

After I had been writing and publishing for some years, I noticed that a number of my poems, never aimed specifically at the young, were — and I know no other way of putting it — being taken over by children: this through their introduction into school classes or their appearances in anthologies of verse for young readers. What is "children's" verse? My conclusion — shared with W.H. Auden — is that there is no good poem solely for children. Clearly, a piece of work that earns its keep as a genuine poem must work for the child *and* the adult. Such poems, written in registers meaningful both to the young and the older reader, shouldn't be capable of being discarded as though at a certain age we have outgrown them. As children, we include them in our body's luggage and carry them with us for the rest of our lives.

Here I have tried to tell you something of myself and through this, perhaps, something of what I have tried, and am trying to do in my work. The final poem in a book of new nursery rhymes I published in 1984 is an attempt to do just the same thing, and also to define what I believe to be the essential role of the poet in society. The rhyme is called simply, "I am the Song."

I am the song that sings the bird.
I am the leaf that grows the land.
I am the tide that moves the moon.
I am the stream that halts the sand.
I am the cloud that drives the storm.
I am the earth that lights the sun.
I am the fire that strikes the stone.
I am the clay that shapes the hand.
I am the word that speaks the man.

New Year's Eve

by Frederick Feirstein

"So here we are, slightly dead in a dying city,"
You sing, as the millennium rushes in.
B. thumps at his shiny black piano.
"But we don't care. We're getting drunk on gin."
You stand silent at the picture window,
Gaze fifty floors below at the maze of lights,
Squint into time for your childhood building,
Your decimated block, your red brick school
With its surreal Spanish courtyard,
You shaking your windup wristwatch stopped at noon.

You might as well be in *fin de siècle* Europe
And the lights foreshadowing the sparks of war.
These figures dancing like primitives — you abhor
Them, their frantic flirting, their in-unison guffaw.
Will you flee to the streets, to "the masses,"
Murderous for crack and crank, any anti-depressant?
You sit in an armchair with a glass of champagne.
"Happy New Year" you toast, though no one's hearing.
You absurdly start singing *Old Lang Syne*.

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

On the Study of History

by Forrest McDonald

American society is in trouble, and not only because our traditional values and institutions are under siege. The nuclear family is crumbling as a result of government policies that are ruthless when they are not mindless. Our once great cities have reverted to a state of nature, in which the innocent are terrorized by hordes of savages who are not and cannot become civilized. Our public schools have lost the capacity to educate, and our colleges and universities are captives of thought police who hate themselves and hate the culture that nourishes them. The government in Washington has metastasized, weakening if not destroying everything it invades, and the federal system is moribund. The economy is sick; public and private morality in an advanced state of decay.

I could try to tell you how all this came about, but the narrative would be a dreary one; and besides, you probably already know. So, instead, I propose to address the question, how does one survive (and I mean survive *as* something) in a world that may not? How does one remain sane in a world that is insane; how does one live without fear in a world in which the only certainty is that nothing is certain; how does one remain civilized even as the Visigoths and the Vandals maraud the streets of the City?

I have four suggestions. Three of them lie within the province of a lifetime commitment to study of the liberal arts. I stress the word lifetime, for though education may begin in college (if one is lucky), it must not end there. My fourth suggestion is more personal, and I shall save it until the last.

Let me introduce my first suggestion by attempting to define what education is. Education is not the mere accumulation of knowledge. One can listen to endless learned lectures and read all the books the *New York Times* touts as "new and noteworthy," and possibly thereby become informed, but one does not thereby become educated. Nor is education merely training: one can learn how to solve problems in economic theory or build skyscrapers or smash atoms or hone countless other skills, and still be a long way from being educated. Education includes these things, and more, having to do with experience and maturity, but these are not all. An educated person, quite simply, is a person who thinks, and thinks in a fashion that is at once informed, disciplined, and free. The first two of these qualifiers to thought, information and discipline, are relatively easy to acquire, though the second is harder than the first. The third, freedom, is much more difficult, precisely because we in the talking professions are by no means all—or always—free ourselves.

Hence my first suggestion: open your mind and keep it open. I hasten to add that I am not advocating any kind of relativism; as Flannery O'Connor said, some people have such open minds that their brains fall out. Rather, I am saying that we need to distinguish between what is absolute—God alone—and what is relative. To believe that one is possessed of absolute truth, secular or sectarian, ideological or philosophical, or to regard anything but God as an absolute—be it gold, the state, human rights, even human life—is a form of idolatry, a violation of the First Commandment and the deadliest of the sins. Doing so utterly precludes the expansion of knowledge or understanding; and what is more, it prohibits civilized social intercourse. Its inevitable progeny are bigotry and hatred, causes and crusades, gulags and gas ovens.

Forrest McDonald's most recent book is Requiem: Variations on Eighteenth-Century Themes, *which he co-authored with his wife, Ellen. In November he received The Ingersoll Foundation's 1990 Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters, for which this was his acceptance speech.*

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Perhaps I can offer my second suggestion in a somewhat lighter vein, though the suggestion itself is no less serious. It is that we strive eagerly to resurrect the English language, now virtually defunct. Many people have called attention to the decline of the language and have sought the root cause of the malady; my own diagnosis is simple laziness. That is to say, we have ceased to be willing to work hard to form and express our thoughts with precision; and we have also, when reading or listening, stopped paying close enough attention to know whether anyone else is saying just what he means. For instance, how many of you have observed that Presidents of the United States, when asked specific questions about such matters as unemployment or inflation or foreign policy, have developed the habit of replying, "We feel" instead of "I think"? The gap between group feeling and individual thinking is, after all, rather wide. Maybe they know what they are saying, and maybe not; either way, it is worrisome.

The best analysis of the decline of the language that I know is one made some years ago by George Orwell. Orwell begins by focusing on the use of metaphors. A newly invented metaphor, he points out, assists thought, and liberates it, by conjuring an image, while a metaphor that is technically "dead" (*e.g.*, "iron resolution") has in effect become an ordinary word and can generally be used without loss of vividness. But in between these two classes there is a huge dump of worn-out metaphors that have lost their evocative power and are used merely because they save the trouble of using phrases that fit—that is, thinking. Metaphors are often used without knowledge of their meaning; for example, most of you have been on tenterhooks from time to time, but how many of you know why a tenter has hooks? Moreover, incompatible metaphors are frequently mixed, a sure sign that the speaker or writer is not interested in what he is saying; a colleague of mine once wrote that, after Roger Williams was exiled from Massachusetts, he "floundered around in the woods" for a while. Too, the metaphors get garbled. In a single segment of National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* I recently heard the following: "collapsed like a deck of cards," "the issue that broke the straw," and "living high hog off the land." We have also witnessed metaphor inflation, the use of superlatives such as "holocaust" or "genocide" to describe minor mishaps; we recently commemorated a "disaster" in which no one was hurt, namely Three Mile Island. Last summer the media reported a budget "summit" meeting in Houston, Texas, scarcely ten feet above sea level.

And that is not the worst of it. We tend to abandon short, homely words and substitute, whenever possible, hybridized Latin or Greek words, such as "hybridized." We are fast losing all sense of numbers agreement: *media* and *data* are treated as singular, and *none*, *each*, and *every* are treated as plural. We have lost the distinction between shall and will, I and me, who and whom, like and as, less and fewer. And we are befogged by bureaucrats, politicians, and self-styled victims who deliberately use words to obscure their intent.

The result, in general, is an increase in slovenly and vague language. But our greatest fault is in resorting to meaningless words when we do not know what we really mean. This is most starkly seen in subjects without a concrete referent, such as the history of art criticism and the theory of literary criticism. Behold this example from *Poetry Quarterly*:

> Comfort's catholicity of perception and image, strangely Whitmanesque in range, almost the exact opposite in aesthetic compulsion, continues to evoke that trembling atmospheric accumulative hinting at a cruel, an inexorable serene timelessness. . .

But the rest of us are equally guilty, especially when dealing with current political questions. When we say "free," we mean popularly elected. "Democratic" has ceased to have anything to do with a form of government; it means "good," just as "racist" means bad. "Equal rights for oppressed minorities" means special privileges for organized interest groups. Then again, the radicals of the late 60's and early 70's—who now dominate the academy—taught us that "liberate" means capture, that "free speech" means mandatory cursing, that "nonviolent" means mob action, that "nonnegotiable demands" mean let's talk it over, and that 52 percent of the population is a minority.

Orwell gives an example of his translation of a passage of good English into a passage of modern English. First, a well-known verse from Ecclesiastes:

> I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Here is the way a professor or a government functionary might translate that simple, powerful, and beautiful passage:

> Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive societal activities bears no necessary correlation to, and exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with, innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

Soulwise, as E.B. White said in translating Tom Paine, these are trying times.

The attraction of this ponderous way of speaking and writing is that it is easy because it avoids thought. It is easier—even quicker, once you have the habit—to say "In my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that" than it is to say "I think." Too, if you use ready-made phrases, you not only don't have to hunt for words, you also don't have to bother with the rhythms and rhymes of your sentences, since these phrases are generally so arranged as to be mellifluous. One shirks all responsibility simply by emptying one's mind and letting the cant of the day come crowding in. It will construct your sentences for you, and even think your thoughts for you. Whenever you encounter a person who does not talk in such clichés, who does not think in clichés, who does not, in short, live in a reduced state of consciousness, you will find that he is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line."

My third suggestion is a bit more involved, and possibly more difficult, than learning to keep an open mind and to think and speak clearly in the mother tongue. It is this: we must learn, anew, how to think nonscientifically in dealing with nonscientific things. "Wait a minute!" you may say;

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"science is what got us where we are." If that were your reaction, I should consider the point made, and rest my case. But let me be more specific. It was fashionable, for a time, to ask the silly question, "If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we solve our social problems?" The reason we cannot solve our social problems is precisely the reason we *can* put a man on the moon. That is to say, it was our pragmatism in general and our scientific and technological mentality in particular that made our great material achievements possible. The essence of this mentality is the problem-solving approach. The scientific method isolates problems and solves them: it cannot take the broader view, for anything beyond the immediately demonstrable, testable, measurable, and provable is by definition unscientific. Americans are parodies of the scientific mentality: when anything goes wrong, we fix it, and do not take into account the possibility that our principles may be unsound. We have, for instance, been appalled to learn in recent years that our children are reaching college without having learned to read. Some people responded to the discovery by seriously proposing that we should reorganize the entire educational system from kindergarten upward—and they were branded elitists, racists, or reactionary dodos. Far fewer people considered the possibility that the commitment to universal education is inherently futile, and that other means of civilizing children should be explored. Instead, the nation did what it always does: it tackled the immediate problem by instituting remedial reading classes in college and by dispensing with literacy tests. This psychic quirk enabled the United States to become the most proficient exploiter of technology the world has ever known; but the same mentality is a barrier to perceiving or dealing with human relationships. In sum, the trouble with pragmatism is that it no longer works.

Before it is too late, we must abandon our specialized, fragmented, problem-solving approach to knowledge and cultivate instead a holistic view, or what might be styled an ecological approach to human affairs. Doing so will be no small feat, for it is one of the unquestioned superstitions of our time that to think nonscientifically is to think nonrationally. To overcome this superstition will require nothing less than escaping the boundaries of our culture; but, however difficult it is, it can be done.

At first blush, one may be skeptical of this idea—that we can learn to see with the eyes of others—but a moment's reflection shows that we perform this scientific impossibility as a matter of daily routine. We usually know, for instance, what others expect of us, which is not always what we prefer to do, and yet we commonly do what is expected of us. When we select a gift for loved ones we try to select what would please them, not ourselves. (At least we do so if we respect their feelings: we recognize their full humanity by turning the Golden Rule inside out, doing unto them as they would have us do unto them, not imposing our preferences upon them.) To put the matter more tangibly, when we were in college, we encountered professors who taught from points of view (assumptions, values, ideals) that we did not necessarily share. And yet we were capable, and most of us were willing, in the pursuit of grades, to write the essays and give the answers that the teacher wanted. To that extent, we were perceiving with perceptual apparatuses not our own and acting in accordance with the dictates of alien perceptual machinery.

Let me offer a notion or two as to how to do this on a somewhat larger scale. You will scarcely be surprised to hear me recommend the study of history, on proper principles, as one primary means to the desired end. I emphasize the words "on proper principles," for historians are not entirely agreed as to what they are about. A goodly number of historians have agonized a great deal in trying to come up with a justification for studying their subject, or, more properly, for being paid by society to do so. Their efforts generally come to focus upon two propositions, both of which are more or less scientific and neither of which is valid: 1) that history repeats itself, and therefore that knowledge of it will enable us to avoid the mistakes of the past and direct the course of our destiny; and 2) that the study of the past will enable us to know how we arrived where we are, and therefore to know where we are headed. I shall not go into why these propositions are unsound, but, like Dan Rather, expect you to take my word for it. In any event, the true value of the study of history is that it can make it possible for us to escape the provincialism of the present. We all know (or at least we all say) that we can enlarge, enrich, and alter our perspective by traveling abroad. We cannot do that by hitting 17 European capitals in 14 days, of course, or by seeing Spain from the vantage point of the Madrid Hilton. But, if we live for a time among the common folk of, say, a small fishing village on the Costa del Sol, we come to realize that southern Spaniards—Andalusians—do not think the way we think. They do not share the same set of values, and they do not perceive reality in quite the way we do. To the extent that we can learn to think as they think (which is not especially difficult if one makes the effort, and regards them as subjects rather than as objects), we understand them; and when we return home and look at our own society the way they would, we can see things, all around us, that were previously invisible. That is the way it is with history, properly studied. Get to know what Americans knew and felt and believed a hundred years or two hundred years ago, and with the prism afforded by that knowledge, take a squint at what is around you now; I guarantee that the experience will be as enlightening as it is astonishing.

Another way is through study of cultural anthropology—to the extent that it is still possible to find cultural anthropologists whose vision is not warped by ideological animosity toward Western Civilization. Though advocates of abandoning the study of Western Civ do not realize it, one of the primary values of studying non-Western cultures is that it teaches us how vastly superior the West is and how limiting and debasing are its alternatives.

Still another route, perhaps the broadest, is the avenue opened to us by literature. Students, of course, are engaged in an adversarial relationship with books—that is, they attack them as enemies, with a view toward plundering them of information to be used as weapons in the war for grades—and have little time for a leisurely exploration of good literature. One of the things we all promised ourselves when we were in college was that when we got out, we would read those wonderful books we heard about but did

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not have time for. The promise is seldom kept: many people stop reading entirely, and most of the remainder read only in specialized fields. That must not happen.

It would be pretentious of me to try to tell you all the reasons why reading is vital. The most important reason, I expect, is that reading is a cheap, entertaining, and safe way to experience a great deal more of life than is otherwise possible or even desirable. For instance, you don't have to rob and kill an old lady to experience the guilty torment of soul that would follow; simply read Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. What I am saying is that good literature deals with reality in the only way it is meaningful, by making us know it as an internal, subjective experience—as opposed to the sciences, physical or social, which deal in objectified abstractions from reality. For example, there are massive quantities of data that purport to analyze and describe social life in Chicago between the two world wars; but those are only numbers, and if one wants to know what it was really like to live there at the time, one turns to the novels of James Farrell.

Enough of that. I promised you four suggestions, and so far have offered only three. The other prerequisite for living sanely in an insane world is an attitude toward life, which I can describe no further than as gratitude and joy in the very fact of one's existence, and in the existence of one's fellow human beings. The cynic responds, why should one be joyful in life, when in no time it is followed by death, and when with each man's death the whole universe, to him, ceases to exist? I can offer an answer that strikes me as reasonable, though perhaps it is merely a rationalization of my own joy. Scientists, as we know, deal in probabilities rather than, as was once thought, in absolute laws. Anything that happens with a probability of, say, ten to the millionth power to one, is pretty much a sure thing. If the theory of evolution has any validity (I regard it as somewhat silly, a confirmation of Chesterton's comment that people who don't believe in God will believe in anything), if it does have any validity, I say, what do you suppose the probability of man's existence is? I am speaking of the movement up through the countless environmental changes and mutations necessary for the evolution from primordial ooze to humanity. I can assure you that it is considerably more farfetched than a ten-to-the-millionth-power-to-one shot; it is approximately as likely as the spontaneous transformation of every atom in this room into an atom of plutonium.

And given the existence of man, the probabilities *against* my own existence—or yours—are again as high as those against the existence of man. You can attribute this to God, or to big bangs, or to sheer blind luck; all I can do is shout hallelujah, I got here! My God, I got here! In the face of this colossal fact, I must exult in my gratitude, for everything else is trivial: no matter what the uncertainties, whether things are better or worse, whether I am hungry or well fed, whether I am sick or healthy, or cold or comfortable, or honored and respected, or despised and kicked and beaten, even that I shall soon be leaving, all is trivial compared to the miracle that I got here. Fellow miracles, let us rejoice together. ©

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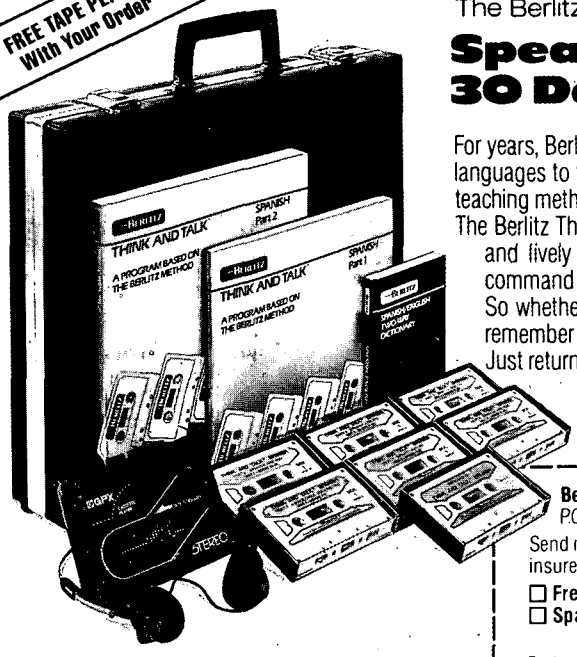

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The Process of Ratification

A Study in Political Dynamics

by M.E. Bradford

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Even as we, in our own time, go about revising, or refusing to revise, our fundamental law, so did our Fathers in the beginning vote to put such law in its place: that is, one state at a time, reflecting, after vigorous dispute, 13 different majorities, some of them very belated—and very reluctant. All of which is to say that there is no better definition of American federalism than the process with which the federalism began: no purely ideological explanation. Yet, though it is true that most American citizens living in 1787 wished to see a revision of the Articles of Confederation, it is a great mistake to assume that a general approval of the Philadelphia Convention and what it had produced was automatic from September 17 of that year onward. Those who know politics cannot believe that a second convention or a circulation of previous amendments was unthinkable, or that outright defeat could not have been arranged. Though some change in the form of government administered by the Continental Congress was, sooner or later, bound to occur, it might have been much less ambitious than what the Framers proposed; and much narrower in the range of implications that even the most subtle constitutional lawyer could wring out of its text. Most obviously, such would have been the case had the state ratifying conventions met in an order somewhat different from the one that history records.

There are, of course, many ways of explaining the sequence of events that provides us with the original Constitution of the United States and then adds to it the supplement we call (after its British prototype) the "Bill of Rights." Even though they appear to be mutually exclusive, it may be argued of these views that several of them contain a modicum of truth—so far as they go. From two or three I will borrow details in developing the argument I propose. But through my own study of the records of the Great Convention and of the state ratifications that followed the deliberations in Philadelphia, I have come to believe that it is dangerous and misleading to dump all of these documents together in some great political "stew." For each convention is a dramatic event with a pattern of its own and a meaning determined not only by the special history of the people it represented, but also by its function in a larger temporal sequence that cannot be recognized unless the integrity of its components is acknowledged before description begins.

As I believe I have demonstrated in the past, no one is more convinced of the uniqueness of particular conventions, of their authority as readings of the fundamental law; no one is more interested in the formal, dramatic view of the Philadelphia Convention itself. It is an action, a form commenting in structure on the bond of Union that it produced. Even so, I take separate readings as only a preliminary part of the task of commentary on the making of our Constitution—and attempt to keep in mind that there was, beneath a tiresome pattern of topical squabbling and theoretical dispute, a deeper level of practical consensus so widespread as to require almost no mention in any of the assemblies that occurred during the months when ratification was in question: a consensus that made our forebears, by negation, one people, united in their suspicion of government, of its self-importance, its affected benevolence, its disposition to tyranny established and imposed in the name of "good causes."

A narrative explanation of the political dynamic that finally approved the original Constitution must begin, of course, with the condition of the country after the achievement of independence. A first predicate of this story is the

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common pride born out of the "sharing" of warfare and of "lesser" perils that produced among men of every opinion a repository of natural fellow-feeling. The seemingly miraculous confirmation of what Americans had said about themselves, together, through the Continental Congress, in the Declaration of Independence, made possible in 1783 their acceptance of a formal connection in the Articles of Confederation. A common enemy and comradeship in arms are not a poor basis for political cooperation. However, the Confederation proved to be only a temporary expedient, a stop-gap measure for use in effecting a transition to some more durable, self-sufficient bond.

By 1786, independence had brought economic problems, both within the country and in the difficulty of its citizens in doing business overseas. Furthermore, there were Indian insurgencies along a now open frontier, problems with foreign debt, problems with opportunistic internal tariffs interrupting interstate commerce, a large domestic debt and a pattern of domestic insurrections coming to a head with Captain Daniel Shays' "Rebellion" in Massachusetts during the fall and winter of 1786-1787. Though not a veritable "sea of troubles," most Americans blamed most of these conditions on the incapacities of the government put in place by the Articles of Confederation and were, *before* the Philadelphia Convention gathered in May of 1787, ready for a new compact that would serve at least those purposes described as the proper objectives of the Framers by Roger Sherman of Connecticut: defense against foreign danger; control of internal disputes and disorders; treaties; foreign commerce; and a revenue to be derived from it. Mild Federalists such as Pierce Butler, William Samuel Johnson, John Rutledge, Edmund Pendleton, William R. Davie, Oliver Ellsworth, Hugh Williamson, Richard Dobbs Spaight, and Abraham Baldwin embodied the same conflicting but balanced impulses toward cohesion and dispersal that we find in the thought of Sherman. As did such mild Antifederalists as James Monroe, William Paca, Melancton Smith, Elbridge Gerry, and Eliphalet Dyer. Therefore, it was certain that something would be done, but not too much—that no remote, arbitrary, and sometimes unfriendly sovereign would be created to replace the remote, arbitrary, and sometimes unfriendly power whose authority we had just escaped.

There were, to be sure, versions of federalism much more ambitious than what we see in Roger Sherman's little list, dreams of Union theoretically and ideologically instrumental in their intention to form a purposive state, something grand and imperial. These plans belonged to Alexander Hamilton, James Wilson, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris—and James Madison. By reminding their countrymen of a politics they had just escaped, they threatened ratification. And there were a few Antifederalists who wished to continue under the Articles as they stood, or with very minor modification to guarantee a revenue: the men of Rhode Island, John Francis Mercer of Maryland, General Samuel Thompson of Massachusetts, President Rawlins Lowndes of South Carolina, Mayor John Lansing of Albany, New York, and (perhaps) Patrick Henry himself. Such men were straightforward impediments to "a more perfect Union." But the most serious obstacles in the path of the Constitution were of another kind, coming from other quarters, and were more circumstantial and strategic than substantive in their character. We have all heard that, in politics, timing is of the essence, *when* and not *which measures*. The ratification of the United States Constitution within the context I have just described is an illustration of that principle.

By and large, the first states to vote in favor of the Constitution made in Independence Hall created very little momentum tending in its direction. No current flowed from these decisions. Nothing doctrinal or intellectually substantial was described by the approvals given by Delaware (December 7, 1787); New Jersey (December 19, 1787); Georgia (January 2, 1788); and Connecticut (January 9, 1788). Or even by a later affirmation in Maryland (April 28, 1788). Because of immediate dangers, economic, social, or military, faced by these communities, they were inclined to go along with any plan of government that would protect their commerce from the drain of interstate duties and/or the depredations of savage raiders. Connecticut wanted to avoid the disorders that were spreading just beyond its borders—in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. It also wanted security for lands promised to it in the Western Reserve of Ohio and relief from the cost of doing business through the port of New York. Pennsylvania had (December 12, 1787), thanks to its great men of business and banking, an image of all the fine things a stronger government might do or encourage. Philadelphia defined Pennsylvania federalism—and kept the western counties of the state in check. Everyone expected ratification from these sources.

Voting for the Constitution in commonwealths that might have done otherwise was another matter. Such decisions in Massachusetts and South Carolina, states jealous of their own established identities, with each of them deeply suspicious of what the other represented, impacted directly on the potential recalcitrance of other Northern and Southern communities. On terms that they dictated in reading the Constitution in a certain way, these ratifications made for the instruction of stubborn Antifederalists who persisted in seeing a Leviathan hidden just underneath the innocuous surface of its text. They were a step toward the accomplishment of the ends of a national connection as these states conceived them: a version that left forever secure the corporate liberty of Zion and the erstwhile Palmetto Republic, that left them free to continue in character—even though they were to do so within a political combination, by way of that combination. Down in Charleston, the heroic Rawlins Lowndes drew all of this matter, a full teaching on the Constitution, from his numerous Federalist adversaries. They defined the instrument of government that they were advocating over against a version less sanguine, and less tolerable—the basis of Lowndes' extraordinary prophecies. In Massachusetts the Jeremiahs were more numerous. And also their respondents. But the warnings of tyranny that Antifederalists offered and the affirmations used to answer them followed the same pattern we can trace out from the Carolina legislative debates.

In New York, Virginia, and North Carolina, the power of the Federalist example in other conventions is reflected directly in local ratification debates. Professor John Kamin-

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ski, editor of *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, has written of the July 1788 Federalist victory in the Empire State that, despite a more than two-to-one Antifederalist advantage in delegate commitments, "it was felt that all of the ratifying states could not be wrong, and therefore the Constitution should be given a chance." In the second volume of Elliot's *Debates in the Several States*, we read of the impact in the convention at Poughkeepsie of word that a ninth state has ratified, and the assumption that such information would change the pattern of events in New York. There are related statements in the records of the Virginia convention concluded June 23, 1788, in Richmond. And an even more telling remark in the North Carolina convention of later that summer. There Governor Samuel Johnston responded to exaggerated Antifederalist fears for what the Constitution will do to the public liberty that "states who have been as jealous of their liberties as any in the world have adopted it." Massachusetts and South Carolina acted because their leaders had been convinced during the Revolution that they needed to be a part of a larger American entity in order to preserve the cherished integrity of their own ways of life. What they decided influenced similar decisions made in New Hampshire and North Carolina. But more importantly they had influence in Virginia and New York—also states that might have voted "no." That Massachusetts approved meant that New Hampshire finally (June 21, 1788) ratified. And when these were combined with the influence of Virginia, New York also ratified (July 26, 1788). Such events in their turn brought pressure on North Carolina (November 21, 1789) and then—finally—on Rhode Island (May 29, 1790). Sequence, not the power of persuasion or the force of political arguments, is the key to this narrative, the kind of "bandwagon" psychology about which any practiced politician knows a good deal. But the dynamic of these conventions might have been very much otherwise, and with consequences we can hardly imagine. Let us think for a moment about such a hypothetical process, to learn from it a truth about the origins of American politics.

Suppose the struggle over ratification had been governed by a different strategy among the Antifederalists and that New Hampshire and North Carolina had been brought to make early decisions on the Constitution—decisions in the negative. Suppose then further that New York and Virginia had been rushed to judgment immediately following the votes against ratification in the two other states. It is reasonable to assume that one or both of the big Antifederalist strongholds would, under such circumstances, have also refused to approve the instrument under consideration. Under these circumstances Massachusetts would have voted "no" had it come next in the sequence. Maryland would have followed after Virginia; and nothing would then have served to get Rhode Island to change its mind. In this hypothetical scenario of how ratification could have been prevented, it would signify nothing at all if Delaware, New Jersey, Georgia, and even Pennsylvania continued to approve the Constitution as we know it. Political dynamics are not the same thing as intellectual substance. The best constitution ever devised by the mind of man would be disapproved within a formula for deliberation such as the one designed to test the United States Constitution if the opponents of the plan managed to react to it officially before its supporters were ready to speak up. For democratic politics do not always turn upon judgments of substantive questions so much as they do upon procedural strategies, fashions, and trends. What I say of such politics was almost as true in 1787-1788 as it is today. The difference is in *how democratic* the politics.

Federalists and Antifederalists were not in 1787 organized political parties in the current sense, but rather 26 different state parties, 13 on each side of the general question, but not agreed with their allies on much else. In a broad sense, town men and commercial men tended to be Federalists throughout the country. But that distinction does not tell us about what they thought of the proper relation of religion to government, about slavery, John Jay's proposed *entente* with Spain, navigation acts, sumptuary laws, or the origins of liberty in a pre-social state. Some Antifederalists wanted a Bill of Rights to protect the individual against untoward intrusions in his private affairs. Most of them, like Patrick Henry and Rawlins Lowndes, wanted only securities for corporate liberty: for the independence of the community to negotiate within itself those values it would affirm. Almost all hoped for the best, once the Constitution had been approved, speaking of it as Charles Pinckney did on May 14, 1788, when he called it "the temple of our freedom—a temple founded in the affections, and supported by the virtue, of the people."

During the various ratifying conventions and in the recommended amendments that brought about the Bill of Rights, the Antifederalists had required their neighbors to specify that there was nothing hidden in the silences of the Constitution, that "everything not granted is reserved." Said Colonel Joseph Varnum of Massachusetts, "No right to alter the internal regulations of the states" exists under the new government. To the same effect, his old counterpart Samuel Adams (quoting Governor Hancock) added, "All powers not expressly delegated to Congress are reserved to the several states, to be by them exercised." We hear the same thing from James Wilson of Pennsylvania in his State House Yard Speech of October 6, 1787; from General William R. Davie of North Carolina; from Justice Iredell of the same state; and from Madison and Pendleton of Virginia and John Lansing of New York—which is only a partial listing of participants in this litany.

That the powers of the new government are few and explicit is in the ratifying conventions both the central theme of the Federalist defense of the United States Constitution, and a primary explanation of why the sequence of ratifications went as it did. If we would understand these results and the enthusiasm with which an essentially conservative people looked forward with hope to life under the new government they made possible, then we should find ground for them in "minimalist" interpretations of the authority thus created. They are a measure of *how different from what was intended* our fundamental law has become, and of the difficulty we fall into in attempting to read into it the ideological fashions of our own time. A good sense of the politics of ratification is much to our purpose in construing the meaning of what transpired as we began the adventure story that is our nation's history.

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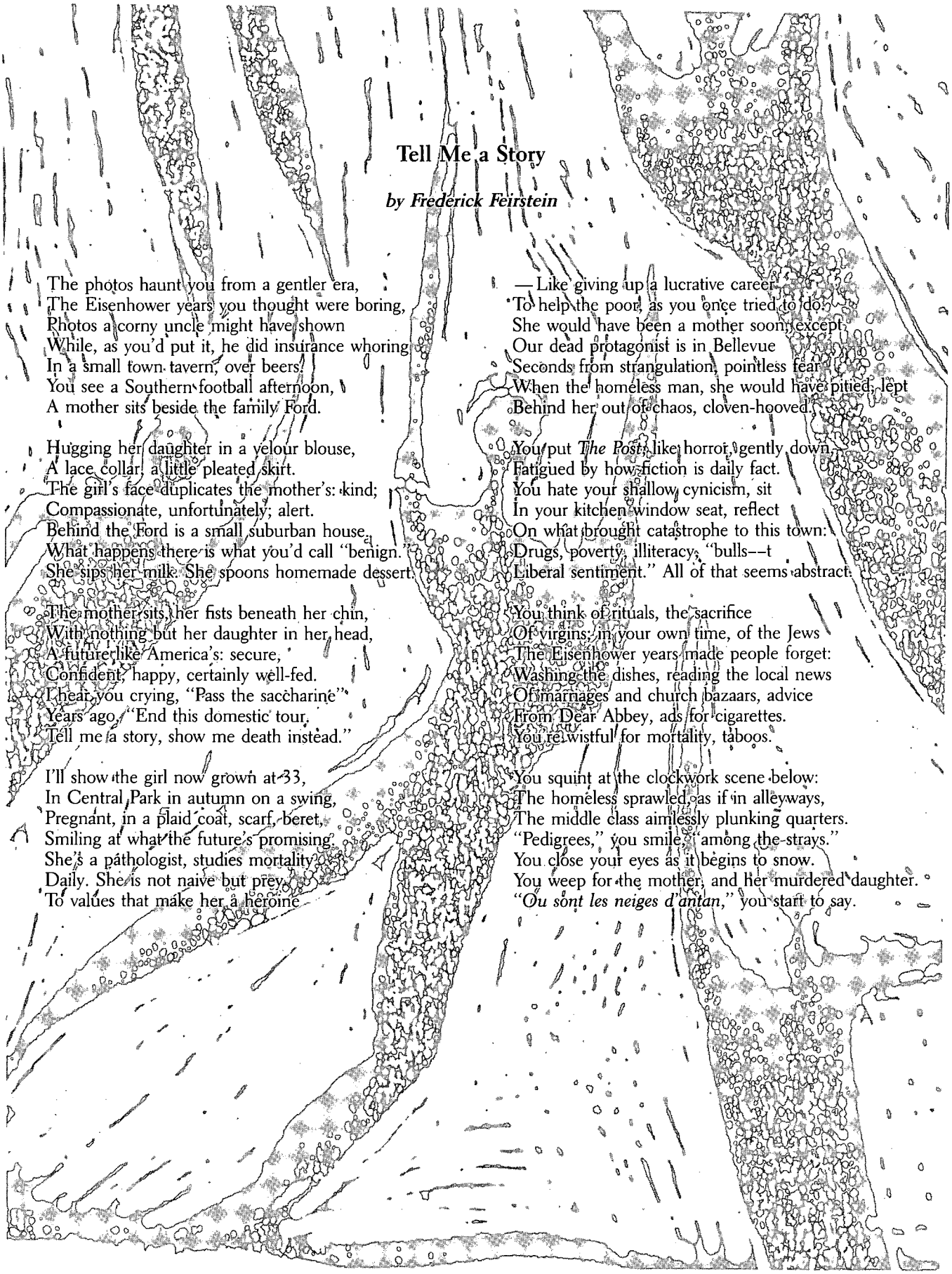

Tell Me a Story

by Frederick Feirstein

The photos haunt you from a gentler era,
The Eisenhower years you thought were boring,
Photos a corny uncle might have shown
While, as you'd put it, he did insurance whoring
In a small town tavern, over beers.
You see a Southern football afternoon,
A mother sits beside the family Ford.

Hugging her daughter in a velour blouse,
A lace collar, a little pleated skirt.
The girl's face duplicates the mother's: kind;
Compassionate, unfortunately, alert.
Behind the Ford is a small suburban house.
What happens there is what you'd call "benign."
She sips her milk. She spoons homemade dessert.

The mother sits, her fists beneath her chin,
With nothing but her daughter in her head,
A future like America's: secure,
Confident, happy, certainly well-fed.
I hear you crying, "Pass the saccharine"
Years ago, "End this domestic tour,
Tell me a story, show me death instead."

I'll show the girl now grown at 33,
In Central Park in autumn on a swing,
Pregnant, in a plaid coat, scarf, beret,
Smiling at what the future's promising.
She's a pathologist, studies mortality
Daily. She is not naive but prey,
To values that make her a heroine

—Like giving up a lucrative career
To help the poor, as you once tried to do.
She would have been a mother soon; except
Our dead protagonist is in Bellevue
Seconds from strangulation, pointless fear
When the homeless man, she would have pitied, lept
Behind her out of chaos, cloven-hooved.

You put *The Post*, like horror, gently down,
Fatigued by how fiction is daily fact.
You hate your shallow cynicism, sit
In your kitchen window seat, reflect
On what brought catastrophe to this town:
Drugs, poverty, illiteracy, "bulls--t
Liberal sentiment." All of that seems abstract.

You think of rituals, the sacrifice
Of virgins; in your own time, of the Jews
The Eisenhower years made people forget:
Washing the dishes, reading the local news
Of marriages and church bazaars, advice
From Dear Abbey, ads for cigarettes.
You're wistful for mortality, taboos.

You squint at the clockwork scene below:
The homeless sprawled, as if in alleyways,
The middle class aimlessly plunking quarters.
"Pedigrees," you smile, "among the strays."
You close your eyes as it begins to snow.
You weep for the mother, and her murdered daughter.
"*Ou sont les neiges d'antan*," you start to say.

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Poets and the Art of Interior Design

by Thomas Fleming

"I too dislike it."
—Marianne Moore

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by Charles Molesworth
New York: Atheneum;
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by Robert Bly
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341 pp., $22.50

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by Timothy Steele
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The Function of the Poet
by Fred Chappell
Salem, VA: Roanoke College

◆

The sculptress Malvina Hoffman found the poetry of her friend Marianne Moore hard to understand and would sometimes ask her to read a poem aloud. "Then I would say, 'I really don't know what that's all about, because of my own ignorance, I'm sure, but just possibly you might explain it to me.' She would start explaining it, and then she'd say, 'You know, I don't really understand much of it myself,' and she'd laugh and say, 'Of course, I was convinced I understood it when I wrote it. I'll have to work some more on it,' and then there would be jottings in the margin, and revision."

This little anecdote reveals more than a little of how Marianne Moore viewed her own art. Throughout her career, she revised her work endlessly in an effort to achieve the dry, almost academic tone that Eliot praised in her verse. In the process, she sometimes edited out the phrases that might too easily betray her intention. The first published version of "The Pangolin," for example, ends with a Wordsworthian contrast: "wind- / widened clouds

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

expanding to / earth size above the / town's bothered with wages / childish sages, / are to the child an intimation of / what glory is." However, in later versions Moore dropped the explicit comment on materialism—"bothered with wages"—in favor of an ending that is possibly more aesthetically satisfying but certainly more puzzling.

In fact, Moore never wished to be obscure; she was an almost entirely conventional product of the late Victorian New England mind, with a strong sense of tradition, propriety, and uprightness. While she included such notorious reprobates as Edna St. Vincent Millay and E.E. Cummings among her acquaintances, she heartily disapproved of their erotic irregularities. Her grandfather and brother were both ministers, and her mother, who lived with Moore, grew so increasingly devout with age that her children nicknamed her "Bible." As editor of *The Dial* Moore's attempts (stimulated constantly by her mother) to keep nude paintings and prurient fiction out of the journal inspired Hart Crane's remark that the fate of American poetry was in the hands of two hysterical virgins. (The other hysterical virgin was Margaret Anderson at *The Little Review*.)

As a student at Bryn Mawr, Moore's teachers discouraged her from majoring in English. The young lady, it seems, was unable to organize her thoughts in a coherent fashion. In one sense, a young poet should count herself fortunate that she does not have to snip and tuck her work to the fashionable patterns of the Bryn Mawr English Department, but this incoherence was to limit the audience for Moore's work throughout her career.

The difficulties with Marianne Moore's verse are largely technical. She is not, by and large, a poet of grand or very complicated ideas, and although a Christian she is neither mystical like Traherne and Blake nor theological like Milton and Donne. Moore's poems are often little more than reflections upon the history of a place (for example, in "Spenser's Ireland") or meditations upon a conventional theme like civic virtue. What makes these essays in verse difficult are not the profundity of their conception but her playfulness with language and her fondness for inexplicable allusions. Her verse is as freighted with quotation

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as Pound, but while Pound and to some extent Eliot were attempting to set their own work within a context of a literary tradition that included Vergil, Ovid, Propertius, and Dante, Elizabethan drama and Provencal song, Moore draws from any book or magazine article she happens to have come across in the library. What is even more exasperating is her inclusion of family in-jokes and nicknames. It sometimes seems as if she were writing for an audience that included her mother and brother and, at most, a few close friends, although even her brother complained that her work lacked focus.

It is not that Moore's work is not worth the effort it takes to plow through it. She has her own dissonant charm, a sense of irony about herself and all she holds dear, an oddly striking way of juxtaposing bits in what could be called the structural equivalent of the *callida junctura*. Her most impressive longer pieces, e.g., "The Pangolin," " Virginia Britannica," "Spenser's Ireland," and "In Distrust of Merits," are full of fresh observations and a humane concern with the implications of national history. What is most often missing is any sense of passion, any delight in the ordinary music of which English verse is capable.

Moore's career might be taken as a paradigm of the modernist movement. Like Eliot, Pound, and Stevens, she was socially and politically reactionary, although closer in spirit to Stevens' big-business Republicanism than to Eliot's and Pound's visions of clerical fascism. Her earlier poems are written in more or less conventional forms, whose eccentricities are more a tribute to Emily Dickinson than to a pioneering spirit. She eventually settled upon a sort of irregular ode, shot through with internal rhymes and broke-backed rhythms as her customary form. Hers is a bookish poetry, more bookish even than Pound's, and Moore spent hours of preparation in libraries before actually composing a major piece.

Although she numbered Eliot, Pound, Cummings, Stevens, and Glenway Westcott among her admirers, Moore was never able to attract anything like a wide readership. In the 50's and 60's, however, and after her best work was done, she was gradually turned into a publicity icon: the dotty old poetess in the tricorne hat who loved the Dodgers. Even after she had moved (in 1965) from the nightmare that Brooklyn had become, she would be invariably described as a Brooklynite. It was a small part of 50's ideology of anticommunist good times, the great public lies on which we were refounding the postwar nation.

Earlier in her career Moore had been quick to see through the literary politics of Alfred Kreymborg and Archibald MacLeish (who offered to make her poetry consultant at the Library of Congress, as she thought, in order to ingratiate himself with Pound and Eliot). As she evolved from poet into celebrity, she allowed herself to be used by George Plimpton, who wanted to take her to ball games and prize fights and then write up the event for *Harper's*, or Truman Capote, who invited her to his famous "black-and-white party"—a rich white-trash occasion that confirmed the status of American literature as a branch of interior design: we now order writers in 12 running feet of leatherbound editions or arranged as part of a nicely contrasting pair of Marianne Moore and the Fiat heiress (the actual seating at Capote's party).

Nearly all of the ironies are lost on Moore's biographer, who cannot mention Pound without bringing up his anti-Semitism, who thinks chauvinism per se has something to do with male arrogance, and who wastes page after page speculating over the lives and thoughts of Moore's college friends but cannot bring himself to quote a single instance of the poet's growing political conservatism. Professor Molesworth does, however, do a competent job of tracing the themes in Moore's poetry and of excavating the layers of personal and historical allusion. The result is a commentary masquerading as a biography.

But even as a commentary, *Marianne Moore: A Literary Life* fails to elucidate the essential qualities of her work as successfully as a few sentences of Robert Bly, who describes her poetry as "a treasure-house: a feminine one."

> The objects in the poem are fragments, annexed, and the poem is a parlor full of knicknacks carefully arranged. Melville leaves such a room and goes to sea: there he sees whales moving about in the sea their whole lives, winds thrashing freely, primitive forces that act out their own inward strength. Returning to land he becomes a revolutionary because in society he sees such elementary forces curtailed. . . . The purpose of Marianne Moore's art is exactly opposite: it is to reconcile us to living with hampered forces. She brings in animals and fish, but only fragments of them. . . . Everything is reduced in size, reduced to human dimensions, as in old New England parlors, where there was a "shark's backbone made into a walking stick."

Here in a nutshell is what is right and wrong with Moore, here is also an explanation that relates her political conservatism to her modernist technique, and here is a concise metaphor for what Robert Bly thinks is wrong with American poetry. It is too cautious, too domesticated, too taken up with things rather than with the interior life. While Spanish and Italian modernists have been exploring the private world of conscious experience, Americans like Moore, William Carlos Williams, and their disciples have been insistent upon detailing the surfaces of things.

Even where such poetry is successful, Bly argues, it should breed a counterrevolution. It hasn't because poetry is now an academic machine that cranks out young disciples as so many replicas of their masters. The M.F.A. programs can teach the students certain tricks of the modernist and postmodernist trade; they cannot serve as a substitute for experience or passion, as Bly tells Wayne Dodd in an interview. "What has taken place is the domestication of poetry," and while otters or minks "will reproduce better in captivity," their offspring will grow up without knowing anything of the real world in which their kind is meant to survive. "That's one metaphor to explain the amazing tameness of the sixty to eighty volumes of poetry published each year, compared with the compacted energy of a book by Robinson Jeffers that appeared the same

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year as a book by Wallace Stevens, and those appearing the same year as one of Eliot's extremely kooky books."

Bly blames the domestication of poets on the universities and the National Endowment for the Arts, which has enabled publishers to put out books of bad or indifferent verse without taking risks or suffering consequences. In addition to the "genial corruption" of small publishers paying tax-subsidized salaries to wives and friends, the NEA is stunting the growth of writers who are encouraged to rush into print before they have really found their own voice or polished a body of work that deserves public attention.

Bly is one of those radicals who is so far outside the mainstream that he often sounds like a reactionary (never like a liberal or conservative), and *American Poetry: Wildness and Domesticity* is as brilliant as it is irritating, wonderfully wise as often as it is simply opinionated. Disagreeing constantly with Bly on his particular judgments, I am struck over and over by his general good sense and intransigent honesty. Why don't our poets write about politics, he asks. Why is it necessary to be a full-time poet, he wonders. Can't they find something better to do than report on the state of their feelings, day in and day out? He had the nerve to praise Mencken and Johnson as critics, while deploring Harold Bloom as a literary promoter; he condemns John Ashbery as academic, and slyly suggests that the M.F.A. is prized mostly by the social-climbing offspring of poor immigrants.

Bly appears to regard himself as one of the last of a vanishing breed: the writer as revolutionary, and he repeatedly laments the docility of young poets who refuse to rebel against him as he rebelled against Tate and Jarrell. This criticism, valid as it is, needs to be qualified. There is, in fact, a revolution — or, more properly a counterrevolution — against the poetry establishment, but this neoformalist movement to recover meter, form, and narrative has little or no presence on the circuit of M.F.A. programs and writers' workshops at which Bly is used to voicing his complaints. Among neoformalists it is now a cliché to portray the movement as a revolution against an entrenched older generation. Bly cannot believe this, because he has accepted Walt Whitman's equation of form and meter with the feudal order.

Many neoformalists have written tracts and essays in defense of form. The most ambitious project so far is Timothy Steele's *Missing Measures*. Steele, among the better known neoformalist poets, is not so much concerned with defending meter as with demolishing the arguments that have been marshalled against it. His principal antagonists are, inevitably, Pound and Eliot, who insisted that modern poetry had to be based on the language and rhythms of real speech. In Steele's view, the modernists have confused questions of language and dialect, which are always changing, with the formal foundation of all poetry, which is meter.

To make his case, Steele examines the great periods of poetic revolution: the ages of Euripides, Horace, Dryden, and Wordsworth. In none of them, he insists, was there anything like a revolution against meter and form, only a concern with the proper language of poetry. The rebellion against meter, he suggests, is a by-product of the changed status of poetry in the 19th century. In earlier ages, verse had been the preeminent vehicle of imaginative writing, but some time in the last century, fiction caught up and surpassed poetry. Consciously or not, poets began to adopt views of rhythm that were remarkably similar to ancient discussions of prose, which was supposed to display rhythms appropriate to speech, without being absolutely metrical.

This is a provocative analysis, to say the least, and Steele argues his case patiently and reasonably. However, his brief would be far more effective if he had been able to establish a direct connection between ancient rhetoricians and the advocates of free verse. Instead, he contents himself with a conjecture: "One would think that Eliot and Pound, both of whom expressed an interest in classical literature, might have known some of the material." Indeed, and the scholar's first task would be to determine which ancient rhetorical treatises had been part of the poets' school curriculum, and which authors they have quoted or mentioned. I should be very surprised to learn that Eliot had not read Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, for example, and it would be a relatively simple matter for a scholar to determine. But Mr. Steele, although he is an able poet and a forceful essayist, is no scholar, and his book is riddled with inaccuracies and mistakes that a well-trained dullard could easily correct.

His discussion of Euripides' "revolution," for example, is somewhat misleading. Steele assumes that Euripides was not, like Aeschylus, a moral writer. What is worse, he does not even discuss the revolution in lyric form that is associated with Euripides and Timotheus, and then when he leaps from Euripides to the Roman poet Horace, he entirely skips over the really important revolution in Hellenistic poetry, the Alexandrian movement, which provides the context for any serious discussion of Roman poetry. The omission of Callimachus and the other Alexandrians is all the more embarrassing, since Pound and Eliot have more than once been compared with Alexandrian poets whose works combined great erudition with colloquial speech — another Alexandrian trait that is also found in Horace. In noting that Horace recommended a pedestrian style but wrote his odes in a higher style, Steele blurs the crucial ancient distinctions of genre that dictated different styles (even dialects), forms, meters, and diction for different types of poetry.

A man would have to squander a good part of his life on thoroughly learning Greek and Latin, mastering the technical terminologies of metrics, music, and rhetoric, plowing through the enormous bibliography (all in German) before he could begin to write about the theory and technique of ancient verse, and this is even before one could begin to contemplate the influence of ancient theory on English verse. There may be today as many as half a dozen scholars who could have undertaken this project, and even they would be reluctant to assume such a burden.

One can appreciate Mr. Steele's desire to touch upon these matters and even admire his ambition. Indeed, his intelligent and well-intentioned book may prove to be the most influential critical work produced by the younger neoformalists. When he puts off the trappings of the scholar and reassumes the mantle of the poet-critic, he writes

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very sensibly of the trap into which modern poets have fallen. Nonetheless, Steele remains optimistic: "Who could have predicted in 1560 that Shakespeare would be born? Who could have anticipated, at that rather undistinguished point in English literary history, the extraordinary work that he and contemporaries like Jonson and Donne would be producing before the century was out?"

One can only wish that such optimism were justified. But great poetry is not the result of some genetic accident. Poetry grows out of the life of a community, not out of a poet's brain or in a workshop, even a formalist workshop. Robert Bly may have hit upon an important point in noticing the preponderance of immigrants' children and grandchildren among M.F.A.'s. Comparatively few of our better poets have been of anything but old American stock. Quite as much as the Yankee and Southern poets of the 19th century, the moderns — Frost, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Crane, Moore, Cummings — all had roots in the American past. In fiction the case is different: there have been many fine novels on the immigrant experience. In poetry, however, it has been the national experience that has, for the most part, occupied the attention of poets who have been concerned with social history. Adams and Jefferson are important personae in the *Cantos*, and *The Bridge* is Hart Crane's attempt at a national epic, but I cannot think of major works of poetry that are the equivalent of *Giants in the Earth*, *My Antonia*, or *Call It Sleep*.

I think the answer lies within the nature of poetry itself. At its best, verse has been able to express a community's idea of itself. Homer and Aeschylus, Vergil and Horace, Shakespeare, Scott, Wordsworth, and Tennyson all wrote explicitly as recorders and interpreters of their nation's histories. There are, of course, many other types of poetry, but in the Anglo-American tradition, most of the best work has been done by writers responding to a community to which they belonged. Could Milton have been anything but a 17th-century Puritan? Hellenistic Greeks managed to write a cosmopolitan poetry, but even they were obsessed with local history, to say nothing of their common Greekness.

Is the decay of poetry's estate — both of poets and readers — a reflection of a deeper decay in the national character, of a nation without an identity, a people without a history? Even at the beginning of this century Frost worked hard at being a Yankee, and poor Vachel Lindsay stumped across the length and breadth of the heartland, looking for its soul. Two generations later, Lowell and Berryman seemed to have learned their America out of books. Is it an accident that today so much of the best poetry is being written by a few Southerners who, whether they hate or love the South, cannot escape it?

Fred Chappell still believes in the poet's vocation — not, it is true, in this chauvinist sense. In his recent essay, "The Function of the Poet" (an address presented at Roanoke College), Mr. Chappell writes of the social difficulties occasioned by his eccentric choice of profession. He used to tell strangers he was an English teacher, which always elicited one of two responses: "I guess I'd better watch my grammar," or "That was my worst subject in school." But now he tells the "shiny young executives" he is a poet:

> Then comes the longest pause
> you could ever imagine: the
> Byzantine civilization comes
> and goes while this nice young
> man ponders. Finally comes the
> sentence, the phrase that
> enables him to turn back to his
> figures and bottom lines with
> equanimity, dismissing me and
> my concerns to Etruscan
> obscurity. "I suppose," he says,
> "there's not much money in
> that."

But even people who have twitted Chappell for years for being a poet send him the poems they have written in response to the great moments of their lives. We cannot, it would seem, live without poetry, at least occasionally, and the vast sums of money that America spends on the generally poor verse of songwriters and rappers is powerful testimony to this need. Being Americans, it is true, we pay for a lot of bad verse that sounds exactly the same, just as we spend enormous sums in a year on hamburgers that all taste the same. Neither is terribly nourishing, either for the body or the soul, but they enable us to get by. Most of us have not yet, however, sunk to the point of eating texturized soy protein and synthetic food, and few of us are willing to read the synthetic verse by-products of the poetry workshops. ◈

LIBERAL ARTS

GIMME PRISON, NOT PROBATION

"It's the first time I've ever had where somebody was trying to break into jail," said Houston's Assistant District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal. According to the AP, a twenty-two-year-old landscaper named David Winfree pleaded guilty last July for breaking into the Municipal Prison Farm and was sentenced to a year in the Harris County Jail. He was arrested in the prison's maintenance building, where he said he was looking for landscaping tools.

"It gotten to the point that the judicial system has made it so attractive for criminals that criminals ask us for prison time instead of probation," said state District Judge Michael McSpadden. He was referring to the rash of recent incidents in which criminals have requested prison time instead of probation because of the high probability of receiving early release. Early release has become the solution of choice for states with overcrowded prisons.

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Poems and McPoems

by Fred Chappell

"Even one verse alone sometimes makes a perfect poem."
—Ben Jonson

Old and New Poems
by Donald Hall
New York: Ticknor and Fields;
244 pp., $24.95

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It was Donald Hall who gave us that useful and precise critical term "McPoem" to describe the garden variety contemporary poem in flabby free verse whose dismal ambitions are set to a spavined music. Hall is a savvy and perspicacious critic, and the bloke who undertakes to write about his work has the immediate task of not appearing a pure fool before his subject.

But with the best intentions in the world, the best preparation and the most meticulous care, we all write a certain number of McPoems. I've done so. So have Robert Penn Warren and Howard Nemerov and Richard Wilbur. Donald Hall has published more than a few, as he will sorrowfully admit. In fact, it was he and Robert Bly and Lewis Simpson and Galway Kinnell who helped to develop the McPoem in the 1960's by borrowing surrealism's quaintest mannerisms. This stuff was called Deep Image poetry and constituted a sort of versified Method Acting mumble. Here is a sample from Hall's "The Alligator Bride": "The sky is a gun aimed at me. / I pull the trigger. / The skull of my promises / leans in a black closet, gapes / with its good mouth / for a teat to suck." In about three days college sophomores learned to write this kind of babble by the yard; in another week they learned to think it was poetry.

If Donald Hall felt called upon to defend these lines, he would make a good case for them; in literature everything is defensible because everything is open to attack, and Hall's best critical work is his appreciations of other poets. The silly passage above may be justified by autobiographical circumstance: several times in his career Hall has foundered, has hit dry spells and halted verse composition entirely. Then he found a way to begin anew, writing in a style that looks radically different from what came before. "The Alligator Bride" is one of a number of poems that enabled Hall to pick up his pen and start over. Other poems that mark similar stages

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

are "The Long River," "The Blue Wing," and "Kicking the Leaves."

The broad variety of Hall's writing has long been a source of wonder. Besides poetry and criticism, he has published fiction, drama, children's literature, biography, and reminiscence. His poetry encompasses all sorts of forms, from steely epigrams, like the one addressed to a philosopher ("The world is everything that is the case. / Now stop your blubbering and wash your face.") to an attempt at a contemporary epic. This latter poem, called *The One Day*, is an honorable effort, but hobbled by muddy organization and some puffy rhetoric. It won an award from the National Book Critics Circle, a group whose selection committees have boasted in the organization's newsletter that they don't like poetry and don't read it.

But it is not Hall's fault that a horde of critical midges have conspired to give him a prize for work that is not his best. His best work is very fine indeed and there is plenty of it. So much of it, in fact, that my list of favorite poems is too long to include here. But I will name a few I consider among the best written in two generations: "Exile," "At Delphi," "The Long River," "The Moon," "Beau of the Dead," "In the Kitchen of the Old House," "The Blue Wing," "The Table," "Kicking the Leaves," "The Black-Faced Sheep," "Names of Horses," "Whip-Poor-Will," "Old-Timers' Day," and "On a Horse Carved in Wood."

Knowing readers will see that I've included a few Deep Image poems among my tip-top favorites. When Donald Hall is writing well, he can bring to almost any kind of discourse a profound and polished wit, a fineness of observation that a naturalist might envy, and a warm and ready affection. These qualities are controlled by a firm intelligence, a sly curiosity, and a wary critical sense.

When he makes mistakes it is sometimes because he tries to write beyond his means. One of his character traits is an admiration of the vatic voice, the mystic vision; he would like to achieve some of the effects we find in James Wright and Robert Bly, or even in William Blake and Walt Whitman. It is

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probably Whitman who tempts him into such lugubrious mistakes as these lines from "Praise for Death": "Let us praise death in old age. Wagging our tails, / bowing, whimpering, let us praise sudden crib-death / and death in battle." It was the thought of Whitman or of Christopher Smart that caused him to write: "We praise death when we smoke, and when we stop smoking."

But if those aberrant lines are set against the last stanza of "At Delphi" we see the difference when the poet is at the top of his form. Before knowing this poem, I could never imagine that I would find an American lyric that would give me the sensation of being a figure in a painting by Hubert Robert or Claude Lorrain. The speaker of "At Delphi" has told of a visit to the city of the ancient oracle and of his remembering the history of the locale. These final lines distill his experience:

> No priestess spoke. I heard
> one sound.
> The donkey's sure and
> nerveless plod
> Past ruined columns of a god
> Made dactyls on the ground.

I am not merely praising the restraint of the lines, though Hall knows well an important point of which others are unaware — that restraint is not a negative virtue. It is just that in these lines a quiet tone sounds a deeper resonance than in other poems where the voice straining for prophecy drowns out nuance.

When Hall's ebullience is successful, though, he is more effective than Allen Ginsberg or Anne Waldman or Diane Wakoski or two score other poets who have made careers of ranting. One poem, "O Cheese," is intended partly as a send-up of the relentless apostrophizers. ("O cheeses of gravity, cheeses of wistfulness, cheeses / that weep continually because they know they will die.") When his considerable and considered humor animates his phrases, we can often find lines as charming as this description of cows in "Great Day in the Cows' House": "Now these wallowing / big-eyed calf-makers, bone-rafters for leather, / awkward arks, cud-chewing lethargic mooers, / roll their enormous heads, trot, gallop, bounce, / cavort, stretch, leap, and bellow — / as if everything heavy and cold vanished at once / and cow spirits floated / weightless as clouds in the great day's windy April."

But for Hall the road of excess does not always lead to the palace of wisdom. His humor too may betray him and in a prose poem called "The Presidentiad" it does so murderously. I will quote two sentences simply to show that *aliquando dormitat bonus Homerus*, that even the brightest among us may have profoundly moronic moments. "Disraeli wore knickers and practiced swinging a golf club. He whistled frequently, which annoyed Calvin Coolidge, who had affected the dress of a Prussian general from the 1870 war."

These sentences are dreadful enough to demonstrate clearly Hall's courage. He seems willing to try almost anything. He must foresee that a great deal of what he attempts will fail, yet he goes ahead and gives it his best shot. Few contemporary poets of Hall's stature have written so badly; we simply cannot imagine Richard Wilbur or Henry Taylor stepping so clumsily on their cravats as Hall does in the last section of "Eating the Pig," for example, or in "The Wreckage."

But then few other poets are likely to produce an eerie triumph like "The Moon." "A woman who lived / in a tree caught / the moon in a kettle," this poem begins, and it goes on to tell a wonder tale about how the woman boiled the moon down to a bean and ate it, and how it "grew / like a child inside her" until she had to give it birth. Now the woman nurses the moon "while the wind perches / like a heavy bird / in the void branches / of a tree, beside / a cold kettle."

This haunting little story is presented in diction as simple as anyone can muster; the meter is an unobtrusive line of two accents; the syntax is straightforward. The difficulties of conception and composition are apparent only when we consider Hall's purpose — to invent, using entirely traditional folklore material, a new legend that accounts for the lunar phases.

It is tempting to dismiss this poet's simpler poems as being too obvious in intention and too easy in execution to bear fruitful close examination. But his simplicity is as deceptive as it is engaging. "Old Timer's Day" is a bit more complex than "The Moon" in its use of simile, but its language and narrative line are just as simple as in the other poem, and its final allusive simile ascends to an effect touching and surprising. The lines report the sight of a favorite baseball player of yesteryear who is taking part in an old timers' game, "laboring forward / like a lame truckhorse" after a fly ball and catching it at the last instant. It's a good catch, and the spectators applaud. "On a green field / we observe the ruin / of even the bravest / body, as Odysseus / wept to glimpse / among shades the shadow / of Achilles."

The animal metaphors that the poem has employed in its earlier lines — truckhorse, filly, gartersnake — have not prepared us for this sudden elevation of comparison, the revelation of heroic dimension. The surprise of the allusion transforms our experience of the poem with a gesture that looks nonchalant, the magician's gesture as he releases a flight of doves from empty air while his audience sits silent with astonishment.

That is my reaction, the feelings of a reader sentimental about baseball and Homer, and there will be others who find the poem a little too calculated, a little too contrived. Yet Hall distrusts contrivance, and it is partly because of his ambition to avoid it that he turns to his vatic and surrealistic repertoires. He is possessed by natural but contrary urges: to use the poem as a means of exploring new levels of emotion, new planes of discovery, and at the same time to shape it into a dramatic and artistic whole. One of his exercises in personification, "The Poem," begins by describing the explorative function: "It discovers by night / what the day hid from it." It ends by affirming the mysteriousness of its subject: "Who knows / what it is thinking?"

Well, the poet knows something of what the poem is thinking. Not because he has written it, but because he has written it many times. And if the poem manages to say something a little different to him each time, the way he hopes it will speak to other less accustomed readers, it also manages to say some of the same things over again. Our ordinary everyday lives are just as mysterious and amazing as the imagination we bring to bear upon them; in fact, there is no ordinary life that is not esoteric at heart.

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"The Coffee Cup" takes this latter theme as its subject. Calmly it set the scene of life in a small New Hampshire town: "The newspaper, the coffee cup, the dog's / impatience for his morning walk: / These fibers braid the ordinary mystery." The lines then record the death and funeral of Anthony "Cat" Middleton, the schoolbus driver, and of his replacement by Mrs. Ek, a woman "with one / eye blue and the other gray." If this New England day were observed from a distance, spatial or historical or sociological, it would be indistinguishable from a thousand other days, its cycle of dying and living repeated as in a corridor of mirrors. But when we see it close up, it displays its mysteriousness in unique details, like the image of Mrs. Ek's eyes. Hall then draws his conclusion, without the skimpiest transition: "Everything / is strange; nothing is strange: / yarn, the moon, gray hair in a bun, / New Hampshire, putting on socks."

Here is one of those places where the poet must have foreseen that objections would be brought and decided that the risk was necessary. He knew that some persnickety critic would describe the last phrase, "putting on socks," as anticlimactic almost to the point of bathos and wayward almost to the point of grotesqueness. He knew that another critic would call the phrase preachy and sentimental. But he went ahead and wrote it down and published it.

A composer once confided to me that certain passages of Stravinsky did not bear up well under harmonic analysis. "In fact, some bars look just plain stupid," he said. "All you can do is shrug and say, Well, it's Stravinsky so it must be all right." That's the way I feel about this passage and a number of others: well, it's Donald Hall so it's probably okay. Lesser poets wouldn't get away with the things he does, but then lesser poets wouldn't attempt them.

Hall's poems allow us to see him in many guises, as Urbane Augustan, Metaphysical Wit, Pastoral Elegist, Biting Satirist, and so on. I don't know that a critic is entitled to prefer one voice over another; it is his duty to give the poet the freedom of the character he chooses to write about. But an admiring reader is permitted to have favorites, and when I place myself in that position I find that I like the Openhearted Christian maybe best of all.

In these days it is nearly impossible to write plainspoken religious poetry. We have grown addicted to our dim self-doubt and acid ironies, and a simple heartfelt religious lyric is likely to seem falsely ingenuous, unconvincingly childish. We are so unused to the mode that we may think we smell mockery even where we know there is none. Yet such poems can still be written—with a little help perhaps from Anonymous, Ben Jonson, and George Herbert—and, with a little willingness on the part of the reader they can still be brightly enjoyed. Here is "A Carol":

The warmth of cows
  That chewed on hay
And cherubim
Protected Him
  As small he lay.

Chickens and sheep
  Knew He was there
Because all night
A holy light
  Suffused the air.

Darkness was long
  And the sun brief
When the Child arose
A man of sorrows
  And friend to grief.

GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES

Restoring the Earth —August 1990 — Edward O. Wilson on how intelligent development can save the environment, William Jordan on restorationism, John Baden on the U.S. Forest Service, and Frederick Turner on natural technology. Plus Thomas Fleming on Earth Day, Chilton Williamson on Joseph Wood Krutch, Michael Warder on Valentin Rasputin, and Kenneth McDonald on the politics of acid rain in Canada.

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The Vessels of His Meaning

by David R. Slavitt

"There is nothing so likely to hand down your name as a poem: all other monuments are frail and fading."
—Pliny the Younger

Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance
by O.B. Hardison
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; 360 pp., $42.50

◆

To say that O.B. Hardison, Jr., who died last August at the age of 61, was a poet is in some respects to diminish his memory. "Poet" has become a hollow accolade, a label with an honorific charge that is not unrelated to the disesteem in which most poets are actually held in a society that distrusts and resents poets and has little patience for what they do. Poetry is often demanding, after all, and it requires on the part of its audience a degree of attention and cultivation for which Jacobin egalitarianism has neither capacity nor patience. But in a larger and less polemical way, there is a sense in which that grandiose label is stylistically confining, suggesting—let us admit—a degree of withdrawal from the great issues of the culture. Poets sit on the sidelines, scribbling and entertaining themselves, while the important work of the culture goes on, strenuously elsewhere.

It was not always thus. There is another model, the all but forgotten idea of the poet who, like Chaucer or Raleigh, could be involved in affairs of state, active in exploration and military adventure and, as a parergon, tossing off a poem now and then. There have been poet-diplomats in our time, *too*—St. John Perse, Octavio Paz, and Basil Bunting come immediately to mind.

O.B. Hardison was a poet, then, in the strict and neutral meaning of the term—he published two collections, *Lyrics and Elegies* in 1958, a part of the Scribner's "Poets of Today" Series, and *Pro Musica Antiqua* (L.S.U. Press, 1977). One might regret that there wasn't more poetry, that there

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

weren't more pages and volumes of his suave, elegant, witty, but often deeply felt and abruptly moving work, but that would be sentimentalizing and would get the shape of Hardison's career wrong. I was at a center for scholars and artists not so long ago, where there were a couple of poets in residence, and it struck me as off and, finally, unhealthy that writing poetry was all they did. They woke up each morning, consulted their mood, and played with their impressions, thoughts, and feelings, as if these were thermometers by which the temperature of the world itself was to be determined—and as if the world was either an invalid or at least something of a hypochondriac.

That is finally silly and not what Hardison did. Quite the reverse, actually. His engagement with the world, as a scholar and as an administrator (notably of the Folger Shakespeare Library), but primarily as a thinker, was too burly and energetic to be comprehended by the usual limp suggestion that the word "poet" carries. His poems were a part of his larger work and of a piece with it. To get some sense of how this is so, we might consider one of his early pieces, from the 1958 collection, a poem called "Bernini's Colonnade." It comes with a note that tells us,

> Each arm of Bernini's colonnade before St. Peter's is composed of three parallel rows of columns. The two arms are laid out along the circumference of an ellipse, and the columns are placed behind one another on lines drawn from the foci of the ellipse. Thus, if one stands at the north focus, he has the illusion that the north colonnade has only one row of columns; but if he turns, he sees all three rows of columns in the south colonnade. Conversely, if he stands at the south focus, the south colonnade seems 'simple,' while the three rows of columns in the north colonnade are visible. This arrangement forms the basic image of the poem: to me, it suggests the relativity of truth as we know it.

My guess is that, later on, he might have suppressed the explanatory last sentence with its suggestion that the poem itself makes abundantly clear. And if we are in the explaining mood, I suppose I ought to make it plain that I advert to this particular piece not because it is necessarily Hardison's best but because I find it peculiarly characteristic. It begins:

> This great ellipse contains two
> jarring centers
> From each of which one
> colonnade is pure,
> Its other, further twin, irrational,
> Making the form a tension,

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no idea.
Here, where I stand upon the
artist's point
(That's reason) watching the
frigid north
And world's epistle side, what's
faith to me
But art to see a single curving
row
Of pillars close the mental
hemisphere;
What's faith, that is, but our
perimeter
Of something
transcendental . . .

Some of this density of hypotactic elaboration is not altogether Hardison's own but belongs to that baroque moment of the 50's when James Merrill and Richard Wilbur were astonishing us all with "The Black Swan" and "Ceremony." It is the intellectual play of which the syntax is a mimesis, the conjuring of the architectural, mathematical, and religious monument into another dimension, that seems to me to carry Hardison's own signature. The dazzle of the flights of fancy and insight in *Entering the Maze* (Oxford University Press, 1981) and *Disappearing Through the Skylight* (Viking, 1989) is already established here as the domain — or demesne — of his fancy.

The brilliant first chapter of *Entering the Maze* that considers the philosophical claims of the architecture of Washington, D.C., is figured here, and if some of the verse later on in the piece pushes too hard and tries too strenuously for its effects, that is, in a young man's work, an admirable fault. Later, in *Pro Musica Antiqua*, Hardison was able to look at a mathematical subject (as how few poets would even dare to do) and quite breezily suggest:

Pythagoras knew the world is
symbols.
Knew beans are evil.
Knew (as all lovers know) sheets
after sleeping must be
smoothed.
Measured the trembling of
those strings
That tie the mind to the sky
In halfs and demi-halfs until it
sings.

Never pick up what has fallen
(pass it by).
Leave no mark on the ashes
(you will not return).
Taste only bread that is shared.
And never, O never, look in a
lighted mirror:
Those eyes will dazzle;
You will die in that radiant net
if you come nearer.

The square of two arms on fire
Forms the hypotenuse of desire:
Become through others.
Never eat your heart (you were
made for pleasure),
Or let swallows nest on your
roof,
Or being infinite, accept a
measure.

It is a breathtakingly assured piece, a playful brooding on mensurability and harmony and their moral and spiritual dimensions and limitations. It is what the thinker of "Bernini's Colonnade" might have figured out, but it goes far beyond the early work in its grace and *légèreté*.

The sense of fun and even giddiness of the extravagantly wrought turn is part of Hardison's personal treasure, and he could do the Wallace Stevens kind of capriole without ever seeming *précieux*, for, as with the best of Stevens, there is a touch of sadness to his ebullience, a minor interval in the harmony. Thus, in "In the Palazzo of Pellucid":

Wherever he walked they talked
in whispers
For his words were goblets of
finest crystal
Each engraved with his initial,
the famous crested P.
They were vessels of the wine
of his meaning
Subtle vintages of red and white
Laid down from the good years
of Pellucid. . . .

Stevens, in Hartford, imagined an elsewhere, a fanciful Guatemala or lush Key West, from which vantage points the dreary Connecticut city of small arms manufacture, actuarial tables, and the pettiness of state politics seemed reduced and amusing. Hardison is able to suggest distance in other, more taxing ways (which Stevens does, too, at his best). The end of the poem is much less blithe than what we might have expected:

You, too, know Pellucid, passed
by his house last night,
Heard the resplendent agonizing
cry of strings,
Moved forward, moved by that
thought,
Into the shadow of his
desolation.
Still he paces the floor, waiting,
Knowing duty and the tears of
things:
Carthage to be destroyed, pieties
served.
Also humble things:
The gods of threshold and of
hearth
To be honored in a dark time.

Days he walks in the gallery.
Night in another place, always
playing.
Ignorant neighbors say,
"Pellucid is playing.

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He lives next door to Walter R. Clydesdale III."

The authority of that last surprising move, the gloominess and sharpness of the joke, is characteristic of Hardison's poise in the work of his maturity. He had a sure instinct and a remarkable ear, as keen as that of any poet I know. It was this otic acuity that informed and enlivened what may be his most important scholarly work, *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance*. The syncretic work he'd done in *Maze* and *Skylight* was much flashier and deserved the attention it received, but this more narrowly focused book on metrics and the development of blank verse in English is magisterial, original, and, I believe, will shape all discussion about the heartbeat of English poetry for as long as anyone cares to attend to such a subject.

The subject is the sources of a metrical tradition that was both rhetorical and syntactical, and with an erudition and a delicacy that are each rare and much rarer in combination, Hardison charts a path through a very dark thicket indeed. There are close readings of Gavin Douglas's and the Earl of Surrey's 16th-century Englishings of the *Aeneid* and of Jasper Heywood's versions of Seneca, and Hardison demonstrates persuasively how, at the moment of its invention, blank verse was a rich and complex system that could be read and heard either quantitatively or accentually. How this system later developed, was misunderstood, forgotten, and then, fundamentally, reinvented by Milton is a fascinating story in itself, and it sheds abrupt flashes of light on the poetry of one of the great periods of our literature. Had Hardison written no other book than *Prosody and Purpose*, his contribution and his reputation as one of the great men of our age would be secure. The combination of this book and the more spaciously speculative works (*Maze* and *Skylight*) and the poetry is, in both senses, awesome. He wrote, in the title poem of *Pro Musica Antiqua*, a line that was mentioned at his memorial service: "Having received, enlarge."

His gifts—those gifts we all received from him—were grand but also grandly demanding. And it is right that they should be.

BRIEF MENTIONS

MAPPING THE MORAL DOMAIN: A CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN'S THINKING TO PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND EDUCATION, edited by Carol Gilligan, Janie Victoria Ward, and Jill McClean Taylor with Betty Bardige
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 324 pp., $30.00 (cloth), $12.95 (paper)

This collection of 14 articles exemplifies feminist scholarship at its best and worst. The core of Carol Gilligan's work has been the conviction that men and women are different morally as well as physically. While men, in making moral judgments, tend towards abstractions and rules-of-the-game sorts of arguments, women are more likely to be more personal, more flexible, more interested in concrete effects than in theoretical rules. In her first book, Professor Gilligan took a second look at such male heroes as Mahatma Gandhi and pointed out how badly they treated their family and friends. Women aren't like that, she argued; a woman's first concern is likely to be for family and neighbors. Let the world take care of itself.

Gilligan has offered the best (the only?) argument I know of for female superiority. This is not to say that there are two mutually exclusive modes of moral reasoning, one masculine and the other feminine. Most people, in fact, employ both types of argument, and some women are just as sublimely stupid as modern men—but then again, a liberal woman is a bad woman, while liberal instincts are usually a good sign in a man. The metaphor that Gilligan and her colleagues like to employ is that of the ambiguous figure, which from one angle looks like a couple kissing and from another is seen as two table legs.

In all of this there is a great deal of wisdom. Unfortunately, Gilligan is not content with wisdom and prefers to dress up her insights in the trappings of science and scholarship, when for the most part neither she nor her colleagues have the discipline or background to conduct either sort of research. For all their elaborate statistical apparatus, the fact remains that they are dealing with extremely small samples and that their "data" are based on little more than questionnaires administered and interpreted by themselves. D. Kay Johnston reports on a project in which fables are read to children who are asked to make moral judgments. The results are recorded under impressive headings like "Moral Orientation of Spontaneous Solution for the Dog in the Manger Fable by Gender," but by her own account the whole thing was rigged to begin with. Children are told the story of the porcupine who goes to live with a family of moles, who find they cannot put up with the dangerous quills. When children quite rightly side with the moles they are asked to come up with another, more cooperative answer. Of course they can; children will generally do whatever the nice lady wants them to do. What is worse, the researchers themselves are so morally obtuse they cannot understand that the mole parents are positively obligated, in virtually any moral system, to protect their family. It is a clear case of right and wrong particularly appealing to the more "feminine" style of moral reasoning, but the feminists never seem to get the picture.

Since a science of morality is probably a hopeless undertaking, Gilligan *et al.* might have concentrated more on historical and literary examples. But here the Harvard education shows. Gilligan devotes considerable attention to the Dido and Aeneas story, but knowing neither Latin nor literary history, she turns to incompetent feminist "classicists" (e.g., M. Skinner), even though there is a wealth of serious and first-rate writing on virtually every aspect of the *Aeneid*. The problem is, none of it has been done by feminists, and here we touch upon the heart of the matter. Women's studies and black studies and Chicano studies are all little universes protected from the standards that should be applied in serious academic disciplines. In another field, an intelligent woman like Carol Gilligan might not so easily get away with the sloppy and inadequate research that is displayed in this volume, and even thirty years ago she would have been forced, if only by competition with men, to have left a deeper and more enduring mark upon ethics and psychology. As it is, she is degenerating into a celebrity and has already experienced the humiliation of a profile in the *New York Times Magazine*.

—*Thomas Fleming*

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La Florida

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

At the Moon's Inn
by Andrew Lytle
Introduced by Douglas E. Jones
Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press; 400 pp., $18.95

◆

In an expedition that began in 1538 and endured until 1543, Hernando de Soto and six hundred men failed to discover in what is today Florida and the Lower American South that which they craved most to find—gold. Four centuries later, a young writer, poet, and novelist native to the region trained his genius on records pertaining to this expedition and thereby produced alchemically what De Soto and all his brave men never seized on. *At the Moon's Inn*, first published in 1941 and out of print for nearly fifty years, is pure gold—24-carat poetry of a luster that shines among the pile of goldbrick novels that contemporary American "literature" comprises. To say that it is the best work of fiction published in 1990 is to be guilty of a hilarious critical understatement.

Here, as in all of his books, Andrew Lytle is preoccupied with the most massive concerns of human experience: pride, valor, death, love, and reconciliation. It may be that *At the Moon's Inn* owes something to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and it is even conceivable that it is owed something by an immediately recent novel, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, which shares with it historical and thematic affinities. Yet Lytle's imagination, unlike the great majority of novelists' imaginations, is essentially sacramental and allegorical, creating textures, effects, and layers of meaning that an equal majority of readers and critics are unprepared to deal with. If in *The Velvet Horn*, a later novel of Lytle's published in 1955, some of the signs and symbols seem to eclipse one another, with *At the Moon's Inn* the significations are as sharply immanent as the stars that bore in from the black sky beyond Christendom, above De Soto's westering fleet. When we consider the novel's thematic complexity and the skillful subtlety of its prose, the clarity of the poetic meaning is astonishing.

In Lytle's hands, Hernando de Soto becomes a tragic hero, and it is a tribute to the novelist's genius that we can never, while reading his book, imagine De Soto as anything else. For Lytle, De Soto is a man of his times, but under the illusion that he represents an age of Spanish chivalry immediately past, when the united kingdoms of Aragon and Castile successfully concluded their nearly mystical warfare against the Moors. Like almost every other tragic hero, Lytle's De Soto is warned at the outset of his venture by his wife, who, having waited for her husband's hand for 17 years while he fought with Dávila in Nicaragua and Pizarro in Peru, now urges him, "Let us take the goods you have won and live among the worshipful of our station. . . . Let us have some pleasure in ourselves," and calls Florida "an evil place"; by Cabeza de Vaca, one of three survivors of Pánfila Narváez's fatal expedition to that land; and, more broadly, by the old Marshal of Seville. The Marshal is a veteran of the fall of Grenada that occurred in 1492, the same year Columbus discovered America. Calling the great discoverer "an alchemist" and charging that he had "made such a hole in Christendom I fear me it may never be plugged," he offers a toast before De Soto and De Soto's guests, the men whom the host has invited to back the expedition: "Señors, I give you poverty, that poverty of the Cross which is Spain!" But he drinks alone; and the hero, with his six hundred men in seven ships, departs for Cuba, from where the invasion of Florida is to be launched.

In Cuba, De Soto breaks his second-in-command, Nuno de Tovar, to the ranks after learning that he has impregnated De Soto's ward. Tovar, in search of a priest to confess him, goes into the chapel where he sees a branch with four green leaves on it growing out of the Sanctuary. "The sap, Father!" he cries. "In God's house. . . . The wilderness grows here, too." The development of these two themes—Western man's Faustian urge to pursue unrealizable dreams, and the ambiguous relationship between Christian civilization and heathen barbarism—constitute the enveloping action of *At the Moon's Inn*, whose title, a poetic reference to sleeping out-of-doors, suggests the will to live an unbounded life without enclosure, as the Creek and Cherokee Indians live in the flesh and the Europeans exist in their boundless desire.

As a Southerner and an Agrarian Mr. Lytle had in mind something more than the clash of Christian European and American aborigine. The Creek and Cherokee tribes are peoples he had studied and understood, and his sympathy for them translates into a historical irony that is both deeply moving and dramatically compelling. This sympathy reaches its apogee in the novel's third chapter, "The Wilderness," when Father Francisco of the Rock offers a Mass for Juan Ortiz, a survivor of the Narváez expedition who had lived as an Indian among Indians for 12 years before De Soto's men stumbled upon him. Following his capture, Ortiz had been bound to the frame and ordered to be burned alive by an old cacique horribly mutilated by the Christians, then spared at the last moment by the intervention of the cacique's young daughters, who afterward nursed him back to health. For a test, the Indians sent him to guard the corpses of the newly dead at the burial ground, where he fell asleep and dreamed that his benefactress was leading him beyond time and the seasons to "No-place, the last station," and a vision. Waking, he discovered that a wolf had stolen the body he was meant to watch, but after he tracked the animal and killed it with a stone dart the cacique ceremonially presented him with a purgative drink, which he promptly vomited at the old man's feet. Oblivious to the Mass that is being said for him, Ortiz remains lost in contemplation of his experience, from which he is finally returned by

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the *Ite Missa est* and De Soto's words: "You live again as a Christian, Señor. Among Christians." The apposition of the heathen shriving and the Christian one, the bitter black brew in the conch shell and the silver chalice containing Christ's blood, though implicit, is unmistakable.

In his novella *The Bear*, William Faulkner wrote that the land of the American South — Andrew Lytle's land; the land that Hernando de Soto was the first Christian in history to lay eyes on — had actually been cursed by the evil of slavery. In *At the Moon's Inn*, Lytle implies, through Tovar, that this same land has been cursed by God long before slavery. For Lytle, the New World as the *conquistadores* discovered it, though it may indeed have been a paradise, was already a fallen one. "Following de Soto," Tovar reflects:

> . . . the Christians had stumbled upon the world and before any knew it, all were drawn fast by its coils. The world that was flesh was everywhere, its power each man knew in himself, its temptations and its triumphs. But this land was the very body of the world. Not through any agent but through its proper self it worked its evil. Where but in one place could this happen? Where but . . .
>
> He put out his hand and grasped the pole to steady himself. Had they perchance stumbled upon Eden, abandoned of God, running its unpruned seasons, ignorant of the generation of man, yet throughout all those generations growing heavier with the bloom that cannot die, the decay that cannot live, for the dry rot and the odor of that fruit which blooms and falls, falls and blooms, at the garden's pole?

"As I have done with this water," the cacique Mocoço says after sprinkling water upon the hands of his Christian guests, "so may you do with the blood of your enemies." Yet for Hernando de Soto, *la Florida* is much simpler than that: "Did you ever think why it is the Indies have been so long unknown to Christians? . . . It is because Satan has made of these worlds his private domain."

Closed behind pride and his nearly superhuman will, De Soto remains the distant enigmatic fascination that his alienated second, Nuño de Tovar, alone appears to understand. Lytle has rendered him wonderfully, while deliberately making Tovar and the guide Ortiz the central intelligences of his narrative. Ortiz is more than a guide, and he is an interpreter in more than the restrictive sense of the word: he is "one who had been lost that all might know the way." Ortiz and Tovar are apparently the sole members of the expedition to have some comprehension of its meaning. Tovar — a believing Christian filled with betraying carnal appetite — grasps instinctively the significance of the tarnished cross he lifts from the fingers of the skeleton he finds in the ravaged Indian village of Talimeco, and after taking an Indian mistress in Cutifichqui he "marries" her in an Indian ceremony that makes him a legitimate member of her family of the Wind. Like Ortiz, Tovar has a foot in each camp, and cannot be wholly caught up in the grim adventuring for fame and gold — and what else? — that De Soto has inspired, but that ends in talk only of maize and women. In both Tovar and Ortiz, the chivalry and the poverty of the Marshal's Spain live on in the wilderness that has become abruptly imperial Spain.

In the novel's final chapter (ironically titled "Conquest"), with De Soto dead of fever in an Indian village on the bank of the Mississippi River and what is left of his army lost in the swamp around it, Tovar has a vision in which he beholds the Governor reclining on the dirt floor of his quarters and wearing his full suit of burnished armor with the lid of the casque closed down. He hears De Soto speak:

> "The will is not enough. It is not enough for one bent on his own destruction. Did I lead the chivalry of Spain to the sacred groves, the blessed land of Jerusalem? No, I am the alchemical captain, the adventurer in gold. Gold the wanderer. Pursuing, I found the world's secret, the alkahest and the panacea. They are one and the same. The universal menstruum is this . . . " Slowly from the ground the arm raised up, the bony hand reached forth, white and shining, and the voice thin and distant, "Only the dead can prophesy."

Andrew Lytle ends his novel with the following sentence. "Tovar moved forward into the light."

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior editor for books at Chronicles.

An American Elegy

by George Garrett

Rabbit at Rest
by John Updike
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
518 pp., $21.95

◆

When a writer lives with and writes about a character in four books and for more than thirty years, as John Updike has done with Harry ("Rabbit") Angstrom — central character of *Rabbit at Rest* and of the quartet that began with *Rabbit, Run* in 1960 — author and character get to know each other, strengths and weaknesses, good habits and bad, like an old married couple. Like old feet easy and comfortable in an old pair of shoes. Updike and Angstrom always shared some particular things — a Pennsylvania home and a feeling for it, a fine-tuned and alert sense of perception, a heightened sensitivity to persons, places, and things that easily transcended the differences between their vocabulary and education and experience. Some of these differences . . . Angstrom was an outstanding high-school athlete, a basketball star some of whose feats have been remembered for a generation. One reads, here and there, that Updike shoots a little golf (so does Angstrom, as it happens) and both in print and by the twitching grapevine one is told that Updike is a country fair golfer. But nobody that I know of has ever yet singled out and identified John Updike as a jock. Nevertheless it needs to be said that some of the best writing in *Rabbit at Rest*, lively, energetic writing, concerns Angstrom shooting golf and playing basketball (in memory and in the pres-

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ence); and Updike writes with equal authority and authenticity about both. If Angstrom's feats are well-remembered, Updike has earned and enjoyed another kind of fame during the same years. Updike went to Harvard and Oxford. The less fortunate Angstrom missed out on college, but served two years in the Army. Updike was spared his generation's military experience, gaining at least a couple of crucial career years thereby. And, inevitably, he makes less of the Army in Angstrom's fictional life than he ought to. It is highly unlikely that it meant as little to Angstrom, in fact and in memory, as it seems to. But this is a very slight weakness and is more than compensated for by the power and capacity of Updike's imagination first to create, then to enter into every aspect of Harry's life and, indeed, the lives of all the others, men and women, young and old, equally who play parts in this story.

I can report that something happens to us when we start growing old and the body begins, in bits and pieces, to fail. Somehow those of us who are survivors and veterans are able to get around the shapes and configurations of different circumstances and distinct experiences and finally see each other as fellows, a judge and jury of peers. This has now happened to Updike and Angstrom. If, once upon a time, Updike was more than a little bit smirky and condescending with Angstrom and his ilk, that's pretty much over and done with by now. There is compassion and understanding here. True, Angstrom does his share of dumb, sometimes ridiculous, occasionally even wicked and unforgivable things, adding his full share to the world's weight of woe; still, his faults and foibles, even his sins, are those of an old friend, someone whom we wish well even as we wish that he did better by himself and others.

A plump book of more than five hundred pages, its jacket lined with the traditional purple and black of penance, *Rabbit at Rest* gets going, outwardly in time, in the aftermath of the explosion of the Pan Am 747 over Scotland and ends with the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo. Parallel to this, first in Florida, then in fictional Brewer, Pennsylvania, and environs, then back in West Florida, Angstrom suffers a heart attack, endures angioplasty, enjoys a kind of slow suicide of forbidden consumption, especially junk food, and ends the story, after another more devastating heart attack, in intensive care and at death's door. (If Updike wants to save him for a quintet, the last available possibility is a heart transplant.) The physicality of the story, the sense of Angstrom's body, its hungers and aches and pains, is simply superbly realized. The outline of his inward and spiritual development, beginning in the pure cold-sweat funk of fear and trembling, and ending with acceptance and a kind of peace, is likewise overwhelming. The world beyond memory and his fingertips comes to Angstrom, as it does to most of us, by "the news," most often delivered by means of T.V. Updike is precise in time and wonderfully accurate in his recapitulation of public events and their impact on Angstrom. These are important; for all four books were conceived of as a kind of time-capsule chronicle of the times. This is especially interesting in that Updike comes as close to living a sheltered life, a life in a cave, as any major writer of our times. The world wherein so many of his generation have been forced to live, to sink or swim, comes to his mainly as "the news." Which is to say he and Angstrom may (maybe not) make too much of it all. He does these pieces, not set pieces, but living tableaux, very well indeed and adroitly manages to overcome the great danger of sounding like a checklist.

Use of current events as the impact on Angstrom puts Updike at risk, in this peculiar literary day and age, of being uniformly judged as "politically correct" or not by reviewers to whom politics matter more than art or truth (life). Widely reviewed, *Rabbit at Rest* has passed the test. As critic Jay Parini, writing in a slick magazine appropriately called *Fame*, argues, in defense of Updike's work in spite of earlier lapses from grace ("his weirdly blinkered essay about the Vietnam War"), "Updike like so many writers, is smarter in his fiction than in 'real' life." Continuing, Parini welcomes Updike back to the fold: "As Rabbit Angstrom, in late middle age, is forced to deal with, for instance, his son's gay friend, Lyle, who has AIDS; with his son's addiction to drugs; with the general filthy mess that America, through greed and benign neglect, has become; one senses his growing political (and, of course, spiritual) awareness of things." I am happy to be able to report that Updike is a lot better writer than Parini and others credit him with being, and that Updike's elegiac portrait of America, seen and experienced by Angstrom, is a lot more solid and subtle than Parini's view of it. He and Angstrom both are too intelligent and decent to equate virtue with intelligence and the spiritual with the "politically correct."

This is a fine, rich, powerfully imagined novel, abundant in its details, ample in its rewards.

George Garrett's most recent novel is Entered From the Sun, *published last fall by Doubleday.*

'Something Like a Final Ordering'

by Daniel James Sundahl

Dream Song: The Life of John Berryman
by Paul Mariani
New York: William Morrow; 519 pp., $29.95

◆

In the seventy-seventh of *The Dream Songs*, John Berryman writes, "these fierce & airy occupations, and love, / raved away so many of Henry's years." The pervasive tone of Berryman's life and writing, spanning the tired, mad, and lonely years from 1914 to 1972, is that of religious despair; somber and violent, the emphasis is on the grotesque dark night of the soul rather than the immaculate light of salvation. In works now taking their place in American literature, including *The Dream Songs* (which won a Pulitzer); *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*; *Love & Fame*; *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest* (National Book Award); *The Freedom of the Poet*; and *Recovery*, Berryman—arguably one of the most gifted and trenchant poets of the postmodern generation—evokes a world of psychological schism. His "occupations" record the autobiographical quest of a deeply spiritual man for religious security against the back-

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ground of chaos, disorder, and destruction, of a life raved away in alcoholism, hallucination, and revelation. Berryman does not, however, merely exploit his personal anguish; instead, with colloquial intimacy, he deals with the predicament of persons in a world who have suffered not only the loss of God but the loss of themselves. Berryman's courage compelled him to record with clarity and frankness his own spiritual malignancy, until at last—tired and exhausted, living with the apprehension that God's patience too had been exhausted and the promise of salvation withdrawn—he let go, jumping the one hundred feet from the Washington Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis.

As Paul Mariani makes clear, John Berryman was a man of scruples and snares, disciplining his life only to indulge and binge. His conscience was delicate but lax; and the combination of the two more easily disturbed and ruined him. Berryman thus makes for engaging comparison with his contemporary Thomas Merton: both were students of Mark Van Doren at Columbia University; both were occupied with literature and religion; both were sensitive to the cacophonous noises of an absurd society, which drove them into alienation and unorthodox ways of living; both had strong contemplative minds, lived long hours in solitude, and came in time to be touched by a truth outside the ordinary limits of human vision. In their own distinctive ways, both have left us a theology of creativity, an immense power too great to be fully comprehended at this brief temporal remove.

Mariani himself is a man of judgment and scruple, accepting the goods of Berryman's life but making sense of it as another poet would. Mariani's own poems read at times like the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, the soul falling away from its scruples into snares, the conscience excoriating itself through penance, the persona transformed at the poem's end until the next appearance of sin from which a new spiritual advancement proceeds. Few poets today are engaged in such profound endeavors, staying "true to the facts—the literary remains—which he or she keeps finding, trying to make sense of it all in something like a final ordering."

Dream Song gathers an unsettling rush and pace in its final third, suggesting Mariani finished the book under the constraints of editorial time. Had he given the book a forced symmetry, however, the whole of the text would be untrue to the whole of Berryman's life—a life spent in search of a center. Berryman's poetry is the only residue in which such a center is to be discerned; and that canonical terrain has yet fully to be charted.

Berryman the poet was, as seems common today, a serial autobiographer. The personae in his major works—Anne Bradstreet, Henry, Alan Severance—are, as Mr. Mariani makes clear, composites of Berryman's own experience; their subjective responses are his responses. *Dream Song* traces the process of self-definition, blending the personalities and the ponderings, until the acquired voice or voices in the writing merge into something like a composite total mind learning to live with its history. The question that seems to override that history is whether America needs persons of Berryman's talent—or, for that matter, whether America needs to be reminded of their ordeals. Our mythology is filled with winners and with dreams of winning. Far too seldom do we hear the incantations of defeat. America, which feeds the spirit, also starves it, driving it to eccentric and egocentric extremes. The tragic undersongs of our poets' lives, from Anne Bradstreet to the present time, remind us that the dream is torn; the modern and postmodern generation of poets, the middle generation, are as much aware of the difficulties in creating poetic identities as the first generation was: "We are on each other's hands / who care. Both of our worlds unhanded us. Lie stark" (*Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*).

The mad, nervous songs that issue from this misplaced middle are sung by outsiders: persons at the borders of common experience, alienated figures whose voices nevertheless carry truth in their assertions. Mariani throws light on the swerving, staggering, slantwise life of John Berryman by implying that Berryman's ego-flaunting bullying is also his vulnerability; to see the drunk staggering, reeling, vomiting in the back of a taxi is to see many of our own actions and impulses; yet we also see a Berryman offering direct addresses to the Lord. Berryman is neither Mariani's hero nor his *doppelgänger;* neither is he a specimen to be carved up for psychoanalysis. He is, to Mariani, a fallen figure possessed by narcissism, jealousy, hate, lamentations, love, and faith.

Becoming an American poet of some eminence, and then retaining that eminence, is difficult enough; finding admirers who have disinterested relation to the work itself, as opposed to trivial disciples, is essential to poetic survival. Mariani is a fervent admirer of Berryman, but also a realistic one; he combines the aggressions in Berryman's life with the aggressions in the poems. A case needs to be made for representing such a life in detail. Does John Berryman actually merit so exhaustive a biography as this one?

In his preface, Mariani refers to a "bracing community" of writers who understood Berryman's "difficult greatness." It is interesting in this respect to compare a portion of John Haffenden's *John Berryman* with a portion of Mariani's *Dream Song,* both of them having to do with Dylan Thomas's death. Haffenden writes: "He called at the hospital on Monday lunchtime, when Thomas happened to be unattended for a moment, and found him dead. Careering off to tell the nurse, Berryman met John Malcolm Brinnin (who had been in attendance all the weekend and had just slipped out for a moment) and demanded accusingly, 'Where were you?'" Haffenden slights Berryman's grief, writing that it is "certainly true that Berryman exaggerated his intimacy with Thomas, with whom he was in fact comparatively little acquainted, but it was less from self-seeking shallowness than from a strong sense of identification." Mariani portrays Berryman as more honor-bound and with an intense sense of grief: "At 12:40 the following afternoon—November 9—Berryman arrived at St. Vincent's to find Dylan unattended. As he looked at Thomas, he realized with a shock that something was wrong. He shouted for a nurse, who appeared immediately, and then realized that Thomas was dead. As Berryman walked out into the hall, he ran into John Malcolm Brinnin, the man responsible for organizing Dylan's American tours, just returning from lunch. Hysterical, Ber-

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ryman screamed at him for abandoning poor Thomas, and then staggered out of the hospital."

The point is simple: Haffenden's dead subject has been killed off, or at the very least deprived of emotional and creative energy, even before the leap from the Washington Avenue Bridge. We are clearly more informed about Berryman's understanding in the Mariani version.

In *Dream Song*, Mariani describes how a poet in our time achieves a dimension sufficient to make poetry that will matter. This is done, he shows us, not by the poet's discarding or escaping from his own personality to assume the personality of a poet, but by accepting it. Berryman did not live a consoling life, but, being Berryman, he had no other alternative than to "go haltingly." Thus, the biographer who walks alongside should not be a transformer, fancifully making Berryman the man into a timeless, metaphysical grand master seated austerely at his desk. Mariani affirms Berryman to have been one more perishable human being who encountered his perishability in poems. That seems in itself to be significant.

Daniel James Sundahl teaches English at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan.

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The Man Who Would Be King

by Gregory McNamee

Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton
by Edward Rice
New York: Scribner's; 522 pp., $35.00

◆

He called himself an "amateur barbarian," but his comrades in arms called him "that devil Burton" or, more often, "the white nigger." None of the epithets mattered much to their subject, for Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890), junior officer in the Indian Army, had no time for petty indignations. He was too busy playing out the life of a hero in what Rudyard Kipling called "the Great Game," conquering the world on England's behalf. In doing so, he became an inspiration for generations of schoolboys who marched into the jungles and deserts and trenches in the service of the Empire.

Burton's shadowy life has long eluded biographers, although many have tried to capture the man in words. Fawn Brodie published a suitably swashbuckling account, *The Devil Drives*, in 1967, and it ranked for two decades as the best life of Burton generally available. In the intervening years, however, English and American readers have learned a great deal more about the effects of far-off adventures. They now have a superb retelling of his fascinating life in Edward Rice's book.

Burton, Edward Rice tells us, was far from a model youth. The son of an English officer billeted in France at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Burton grew up as a street gangster, bullying the locals with knife and sword, seemingly bound for an early grave. He was also uncommonly intelligent, able to master languages and sciences in a few weeks of study. His despairing father, able to foresee a brilliant future for his child if only he would settle down, sold off the family's possessions to buy Burton a commission in the Indian Army, paying £500—a sum approaching $25,000 today.

Burton made his way to India and was promptly absorbed by the strange cultures he found there. Rather than observe them from afar, in the manner of his fellow officers, Burton haunted the bazaars and ashrams, learning Hindustani, Sanskrit, Urdu, and a half-dozen other languages and dogging the masters of as many native religions for instruction. Within months he was inducted as a Hindu Brahmin, a member of India's highest caste; a Sufi master, the first Westerner to have penetrated that elegant and once-secret society; and a Shi'ite Muslim, a devotee of the doctrine of *taqiya*, or strategic dissimulation.

Burton saw no contradiction in honoring three separate religious traditions, adding them to the Kabbalism, alchemy, Rosicrucianism, and other Judeo-Christian mysticisms he had studied as a youth. What his fellow officers thought of the now-turbaned, darkly tanned, and long-bearded Burton we already know; he had "gone native" and was no longer part of the club.

But English practicality won out over English snobbery, and Burton was allowed to roam throughout India as he pleased, a full-fledged spy for the Empire.

Burton kept extensive notes on his linguistic and religious studies, but wrote very little about his period of espionage. One of the great contributions of Edward Rice's book is its reconstruction of the shadow years, during which Burton probably indulged in religious and political assassinations, calming himself with a steady diet of *cannabis* and opium. After months of drug-induced visions and secret travels, during which he coined the term "extrasensory perception," he had played India out. It was time to move on, weeks ahead of the bloody Sepoy Mutiny.

Burton proceeded to Arabia. Disguised as a Shia pilgrim, he smuggled himself into the holy city of Mecca and, apparently without regard for the grim consequences should he be caught, entered the Black Stone of the Qaaba, Islam's most sacred shrine. He then wandered to Europe, invaliding himself to the beaches of Normandy, where he captured the attention of a young Englishwoman, Isabel Arundell, a devout Catholic who would become his wife.

But Burton was not quite ready for domesticity. In 1857, in the company of Captain John Hanning Speke, he set

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off to find the source of the Nile. (Burton's voyage is recounted in the recent film *The Mountains of the Moon*.) He came close, but battles with the African peoples he encountered—and roundly despised—and a growing rivalry with Speke botched his mission. Speke sagely named the headwaters Lake Victoria and took single credit for this heroic act of discovery.

Still Burton could not settle down. In 1860, intrigued by stories he had heard of a strange and faraway cult, Burton traveled by stagecoach across America to Salt Lake City, where he had an audience with Brigham Young, who had heard of Burton's wondrous adventures. (Burton wrote warmly of Young in his two-volume *City of the Saints*.) Rice's account of Burton's time in Utah and later San Francisco, which Burton did not like, is particularly revealing, for it shows a man now beginning to feel the wear of travel and the boredom of novelty.

He returned to Africa, posted as consul to Cape Verde, a place he hated more than any other he had seen. Without authorization, he skipped off to the mainland, paddling his way up and down the Congo and Niger rivers, mapping the inland waterways. He then accepted a posting to Brazil, where Isabel founded a Catholic girls' school and Burton, now thoroughly bored, fell into chronic drunkenness. He left the coast, blindly roamed the interior of South America from Tierra del Fuego to Ecuador, and summoned Isabel to abandon Brazil and join him in Damascus, where, now a worn-out old man, he enjoyed a spectacularly unsuccessful diplomatic career until being ordered to head the seldom-visited British consulate in Trieste, where he died.

In all of his travels, Burton found the time to write a staggering quantity of books—51 titles in all, most of them comprising more than one volume. Fluent in 29 languages, he translated many more books that are now regarded as classics of world literature: Camoen's *Lusiads*, the *Kama Sutra*, and the enchanting *Arabian Nights*, erotic passages and all. For his troubles, he was awarded another epithet, that of pornographer in an outraged but receptive Victorian England. Immediately after his death, Isabel Arundell stole away the tiniest bit of her husband's renown for herself by burning hundreds of pages of his unpublished translations and original musings on sex, the one act for which she is now remembered.

Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton's fame as explorer, soldier, and man of letters will endure for as long as there are stories to tell and listeners to hear them. Perhaps the greatest of the many great English travelers, he shunned romanticism and sought to comprehend the new worlds he found. Edward Rice's biography is an outstanding introduction to the man and his work.

Gregory McNamee's latest book is The Return of Richard Nixon and Other Essays, *published last year by Harbinger House.*

Bring Back the Iron Duke

by H.W. Crocker III

The Way of the WASP: How It Made America and How It Can Save It . . . So to Speak
by Richard Brookhiser
New York: The Free Press; 171 pp., $19.95

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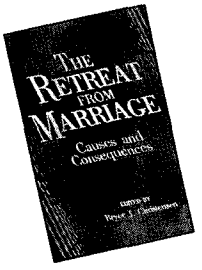
The United States was founded by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and became the political, economic, and military leader of the free world under their guidance. The conscience, industry, practicality, antisensualism,



The Retreat From Marriage

Causes and Consequences

Edited by Bryce Christensen

A provocative investigation of the unprecedented drop in the marriage rate in recent decades, this timely volume brings together papers and commentary from a conference sponsored in May, 1989 by The Family Research Council and the Rockford Institute's Center on the Family in America. The third volume in the Rockford Institute's Family in America Research Series, this book features articles and analysis from more than a dozen prominent scholars including:

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and sense of civic responsibility that characterizes the classic WASP became definably *American* characteristics. When immigrants entered the melting pot, they were to come out looking something like the WASPs who had invited them in.

Needless to say, something went wrong. It started with the WASPs themselves. At first, the revolt against (or transformation of) WASP values was thin-blooded — Henry Adams's anomie, Emerson's hyper-individualism, Woodrow Wilson's progressivism. But by the 1960's, 70's, and 80's, in Brookhiser's words:

> Defections from the general culture were occurring at a great rate. In each case the cause of flight, the bad past the defectors wanted to leave behind, as desperately as immigrants wanted to leave Odessa or Cork, was the world of the WASP. The enemy of every wayward impulse — of black pride, mother tongues, pot, frisbees, matriarchy, fisting, the Southern way of life, whatever — was conscience, industry, success, and all the rest: the way of the WASP.

The conscience that had been the driving moral force behind WASPs had — with a nice shove from Emerson — become solipsism. The industry, self-denial, and practical-mindedness of the WASP that led him inevitably to success (that allowed him to pursue, to a greater extent, his civic duty) has been altered beyond recognition. In the post-WASP world, where the self — the id — is central, creativity and self-expression become the thing, and the self turns its energies towards the goal of gratification. As we are all equal selves, we have no moral right to tell other selves how to live their lives (hence the unravelling of America into its composite victim groups, all of whom have developed their own political agendas to make sure that their rights and their share of government funding and affirmative action are maintained).

Needless to say, not all WASPs have succumbed, and even where they have, their virtues continue to appear — however distorted — in popular culture. As Brookhiser notes: "The puritanism of antisensuality often reappears, displaced into health and fitness. Robin Byrd, who hosts a popular pornographic show on cable TV, on which she interviews strippers and blue movie stars, also does a second show on which she demonstrates weightlifting. No doubt she is a nonsmoker."

Brookhiser is remarkably sanguine about the future, in this brief book that closes before it outstays its welcome, but one wonders if he is not overly so. He thinks that Americans have realized that they took a wrong turn by experimenting with anti-WASP values and are ready for a return to pro-WASP values. He even provides a mini-political platform for George Bush to adopt in the effort to bring back the way of the WASP. It includes a principled delimitation of the ends of government; the adoption of English-only laws; a return of education to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic; a comprehensive denial of the claims of special interest groups; and encouraging, as far as possible, a revival of Protestant, Victorian values. This movement must be Protestant because though the "Nation of Islam preaches this message [of industry and anti-sensualism . . . it] also preaches that nonblack races are the demonic results of a prehistoric breeding experiment on the island of Patmos. . ."

Brookhiser's platform offers swell policies but not much in the way of tactical advice about how they could actually be implemented; and there seems very little likelihood that many of them will be. What this country needs is neither a two-cent cigar nor an old-style WASP like George Bush, but rather more vigorous Anglo-Saxons of the Wellington type who would look at AIDS marchers, teenage mothers, and daycare center agitators and growl: "Fornicate and be damned!" And who would say to all those seeking federal handouts because they are poor: "By God, so you are! Why don't you do something about it!"

But somehow I don't think that will happen.

H.W. Crocker III is editor of Regnery Gateway Publishers in Washington, D.C.

BRIEF MENTIONS

FORGERS AND CRITICS: CREATIVITY AND DUPLICITY IN WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP by Anthony Grafton
Princeton: Princeton University Press; 157 pp., $14.95

Sir Karl Popper thought the physical sciences advanced by "Conjectures and Refutations," the creation of hypotheses that are then tested. Anthony Grafton's witty and learned *Forgers and Critics* sees the progress of the humane sciences linked to the creation of forgeries that are then detected. In the Renaissance Lorenzo Valla used a philological method to prove that the documentary basis of Papal rule, the Donation of Constantine, was a medieval forgery. When the Inquisition failed to silence him, the Pope offered Valla a lifetime job as Papal secretary.

Grafton shows that Valla's techniques were not original inventions, but the bold and creative employment of a philology that goes back to the ancient world. It is still relevant. As late as 1950 Paul Coleman-Norton of Grafton's own Princeton forged a Patristic fragment. German and Italian scholars proved during the past century that a work of Saint Cyprian known only from Renaissance editions is the invention of Erasmus. In the *editio princeps* of the New Testament Erasmus translated into Greek his own Latin translation of the last six verses of *Apocalypse*, as Grafton mentions, and extra verses from the Latin Vulgate at Acts 9:5-6. Coleman-Norton's work was a *jeu d'esprit*, but Erasmus wanted to reform the Church on the basis of his editions of the New Testament and the Fathers.

Grafton enjoys his clever forgers and chuckles at critics who mingle skepticism with gullibility. In the end, however, the tribe of Coleman-Norton and Erasmus are liars. "The critic sets out to fight the monsters that crowd about us in the long sleep of reason that is human history. . . . The exercise of criticism is a sign of health and virtue in a civilization; the prevalence of forgery is a sign of illness and vice." I am going back to thumb through my copies of *While England Slept* and *Profiles in Courage*.

—E. Christian Kopff

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Letter From Costa Rica

by Geoffrey Wagner

America in Spanish?

◆

American Airlines flies you down to San José daily, all announcements in English. Indeed, almost everyone in the Costa Rican capital seems able to speak excellent English, prompting the irony of local kids all studying the language hard, to be impeded from practicing it should they reach compulsorily bilingual schools in America. As a matter of fact, on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, or Wild East as it has been called, a Jamaican patois still exists, relic of past importations from the British West Indies. Payment in dollars is ubiquitous. The day's *Miami Herald* lies on one's breakfast table and Dan Rather's latest toupee invades one's evening room. CNN runs around the clock and Larry King comes on earlier than Stateside. Hotel Cable Guide introduces one to Donald Duck, Danahue, Whell of Fortune, and Cober Girl (all *sic*). It is hardly Costa Rica's fault that it's impossible to close one's eyes and ears today to the Pax Americana. The recent tourist influx is almost entirely American, but in the Northeast I crossed via the Puntarenas ferry to the Nicoyan peninsula and saw not a single tourist, either on the ferry or in the three remotely placed hotels I visited there.

In any case, there is no evidence that Costa Ricans want to change the stance symbolized by Oscar Arias, who left office hailed as a moral beacon, architect of a peace plan signed by Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, in all of which there are bellicose antidemocratic elements. "In Europe they're shooting dictators," Arias is reported to have said. "Here we're trying to replace them through elections."

Bordering Nicaragua, Costa Rica has been living on the lip of one of the most brutal Marxist dictatorships of the region, one that may not have played itself out as yet. Everything about the country, from its charming capital to its black enclaves, seems to suggest: we are part of Western culture and wish to remain so. We are on the side of all that Jesse Jackson wants to tear down. There are no Aztec or Mayan remains, no sense of an Indian terror-past to take forward revolutionary pretensions, as in Mexico. For the native originals —the Borucas and Corobicís—do not seem to have been as brutal as their Carib colleagues, and Columbus, when he landed in 1502, established friendly relations with the indigenes; at least Spanish subjugations appear to have been relatively benign, since they regarded the place as an impoverished backwater, and the first governor Spain appointed, Juan Vasquez de Coronado, established what has been termed the most humane colonization in the region. So there are no Diego Rivera murals around, nor museums full of slave chains, and Costa Rica has now created an international presence as a sturdy democracy, a model to its neighbors who send across their criminals and politicos. *Floreat.*

The result has been that Americans are flocking to this prosperous tourist haven and retirement center. The country's spread of protected wildlife parks, and official emphasis on ecology, have coincided with American interests and brought in a Mom-and-Pop tourism of the better kind. I was repeatedly in awe of the tenacity of our senior citizens on such tours, up at 5 A.M. to follow rare bird and animal trails, to bed down later in some primitive jungle lodge for more of the same in an open boat the next morning. After some turtle watching at Tortuguero, not far from the Nicaraguan border, I said goodbye to an American lady of nearly 80 who was spurning the normal mode of access to the park, by Piper plane, and taking an eight-hour ride down to Limón in a boat like the *African Queen*. I was brought up to respect British travelers of this ilk, from Freya Stark to Rose Macaulay (who once waded round the border into Yugoslavia); Aldous Huxley's treks across Guatemala showed extraordinary fortitude in a half-blind man, while Evelyn Waugh's penurious journey on horseback from Iquitos down the banks of the Amazon amazes me today. But possibly the scepter has passed to America in this domain. More than one septugenarian Mrs. Front Porch I met went on four such grueling tours a year.

As for retirees, so valuable to a restricted economy, Costa Rica has captured ours in abundance thanks not only to political and social stability, but also to the high standards of medical and dental services, so vital to the oldster. I suspect it is not widely known that American union and pension groups and the like constantly case out, via scouting committees, foreign countries as well as our own States for their congeniality to retirees (costs, services, sympathies). My own union has more than one such Chapter, reporting regularly. In these rankings Costa Rica has been rated high, taking the place of Mexico in the past. After all, ecology is apolitical, or should be. It attracts the hippie and the oldster alike. The Greens know no age groups, nor shades.

But, basically, Costa Rica's glory lies in its national parks, their jungles and waterways. The wildlife to be seen is generally small—I never met anyone who had seen the vaunted local jaguar —but no less treasured for that. Monkeys abound, as do iguana and armadillo (called *tatou* in the West Indies where, to my shame, I have eaten all three). It will be a sad day if these centers spawn protection for another sort of animal, the drug addict and gender traitor. It has happened at Panajachel, which has disfigured the glorious shore of Guatemala's Lake Atitlán, and near Quepos, on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast, the magnificent beaches of the Manuel Antonio National Park seem to have attracted the more boorish and contemptuous of our homosexuals, bisexuals, and trisexuals (as in I'll Try Anything). Visit the famed Mariposa hotel in the vicinity

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for a sample. Apart from such inevitable glitches, however, Costa Rica's tourism thrust is exemplary and commendable. What's the hope that in a few years' time Mom and Pop will be displacing the backpackers to Nicaragua?

Geoffrey Wagner's latest book is The Red Crab, *a novelized version of the Cuban takeover in Grenada.*

Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Highway Robbery

◆

On our Disneyland day, the first time for all of us, we rose at 6 A.M. to be sure to get there early, as we'd been warned to do. We showered, dressed, wolfed a donut in the Comfort Inn lobby, and proceeded to our Hyundai, parked in back.

The right rear window was shattered. The front passenger door was open. Upon first inspection, we discovered that the ignition switch and all of our good hanging clothes were missing.

Most people would have understood immediately that they'd been ripped off.

But we're small-city Midwesterners. And for several seconds, a dozen explanations went through our minds (hit-and-run accident, in-car explosion of a soft-drink can, heat explosion, typhoon) before we were ready to admit even the *possibility* that we'd simply been robbed. (Eighteen hundred dollars' worth, to be precise, and $350 in damage to the car.)

In fact, in our shock, my husband and I spent a good hour berating *ourselves* for having been so *stupid*: leaving hanging clothes in the car was an "open invitation," we moaned, as was not parking under a streetlight. It was only on our fifth or sixth time around the subject that he stopped dead in the middle of our delicious little dirge and asked, "What's wrong with this picture? *We* didn't rob us. Somebody *else* robbed us." Our ten-year-old son nodded in complete agreement.

A friend of mine here in Bismarck came home to a houseful of muddy shoe prints several months ago. A little while later, her husband phoned. She chewed him out, and then mentioned the window screen he'd removed at noon and clumsily flung into the yard. Finally he got a chance to tell her that he was calling from out of town and hadn't been home all day. Together, it took them five reluctant minutes to figure out that their home had been broken into. If he hadn't called, she would probably have cleaned up the mess without ever attributing it to a stranger. Husbands do inexplicable things all the time, but robberies don't happen every day around here.

Around here, people who speed through residential sections of town can still catch a hoseful of water in the face or run the risk of their license number being recorded. (And if the police are called, they'll actually look into the matter and talk to the culprit.) We don't ordinarily lock our pickups unless our guns are in the rack. Many of us don't even lock our doors at night, or at least don't lose any sleep if we can't remember whether we locked them. We read in "Nubs of the News" once a week about the handful of burglaries that occur. Juvenile crime, around here, amounts to a lot of toilet paper in a lot of trees near Halloween, some loud parties, an occasional stolen bike, and an open container or two as the kids cruise Main.

This is not to say that there's no crime problem in God's country, only that it exists in pockets that it's easy (at least so far) to stay out of. And until I visited Anaheim, home of "The happiest place on earth" (and Disneyland really is all the good things you've read about it), I had been able to stay out of harm's way. I travel to Minneapolis sometimes, and could just as easily have been the victim of someone there, but it was in Anaheim that I lost, so to speak, my virginity.

And the analogy is apt. After the car had been repaired and cleaned, we had to drive it. I told my husband that sitting in it made me feel as if I'd been assaulted. The worst part was that of course we didn't know who had done the foul deed; all day I wondered if they were watching us, laughing. At four that afternoon it occurred to us that they might return. (They had probably been inexperienced kids, the police told us, because even though Hyundais are easy to steal—which was news to us—and they had tried to steal it, they had botched the job.) At this thought we toyed with the idea of packing up and moving to a different motel. It was after check-out time by then, though, and we didn't feel like packing up and moving, so we simply parked the car near the street under a streetlight. I listened for strange noises all night. What I would have done had I heard them, I don't know. And hour by hour, day by day, we keep discovering things they stole from us, not counting sleep, peace of mind, and innocence.

Yes, innocence—*mine*. It's one thing to read about crime, and another to become part of that murky soup "out there." I'm sure there are very nice people living in dangerous parts of the country who would laugh until they cried to hear me carry on about this one little episode. Our car didn't get stolen, and no one threatened us physically. We were lucky. Well, we know that. But still, those punks had no right to do what they did. *No right.* And I want someone to tell them that. The heck with law enforcement—did their parents know where these kids were?

Thanks to a kind, competent, nearby auto-repair shop manager, we managed to spend most of our day and evening at Disneyland in spite of our bad start that morning. We were so discouraged that we talked about packing it in and just going home, but decided that then the punks would have stolen our vacation along with everything else. My ten-year-old, though, was in a state of disbelief for days. He drove us crazy; the robbery was all he would talk about. I did my best to bend the event into one of those magic "teaching moments" responsible parents dream about but so seldom get, and my efforts paid off. Our concrete-minded son boiled my sage ramblings into something that seemed to satisfy him, and that more than satisfied me: "At night, the good people go to bed and the bad people come out." Robbie, remember that when you're 16 and your mom and dad demand to know why you've been out so late.

Jane Greer writes from the safety of Bismarck, North Dakota.

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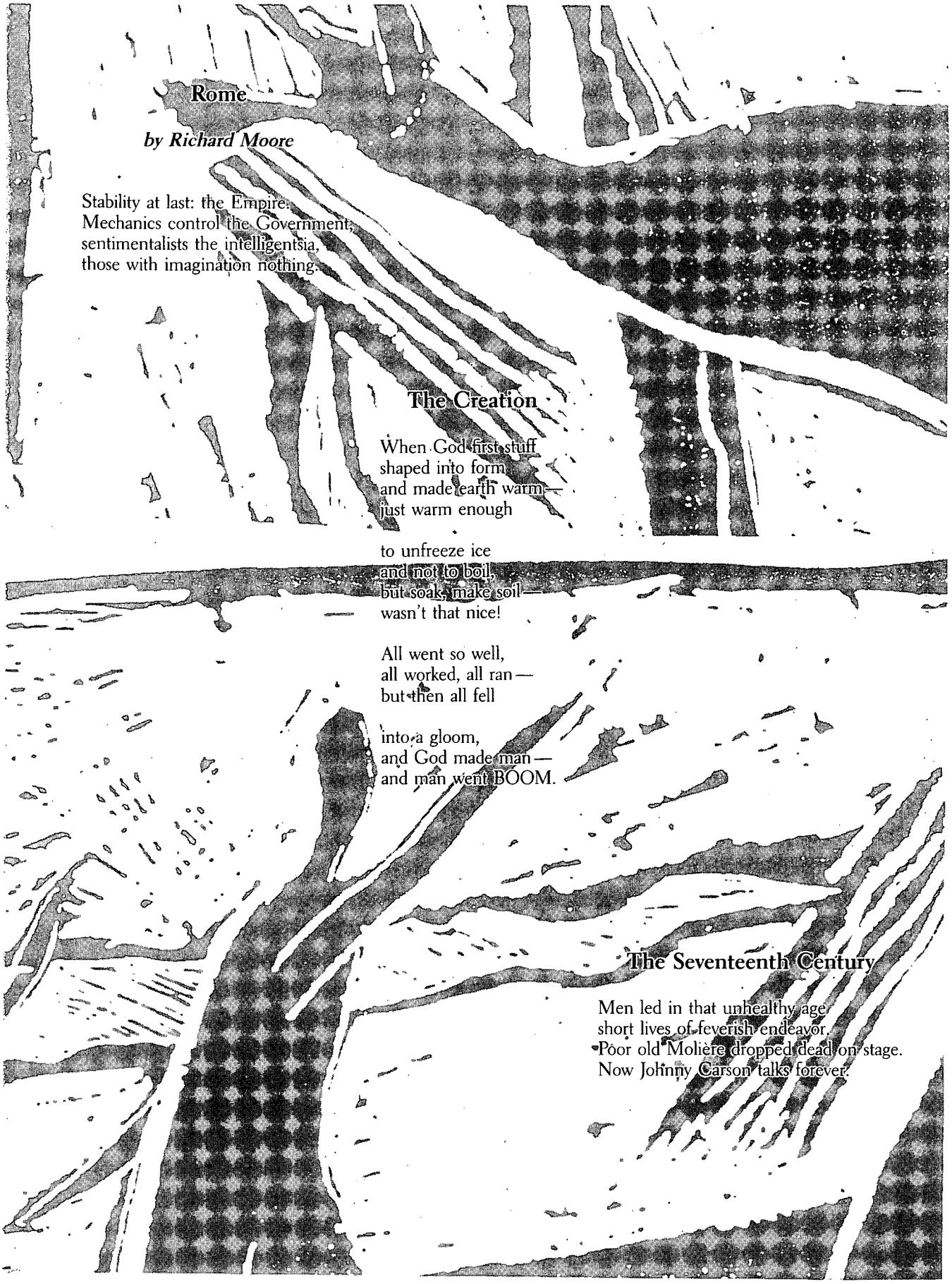

Rome

by Richard Moore

Stability at last: the Empire.
Mechanics control the Government,
sentimentalists the intelligentsia,
those with imagination nothing.

The Creation

When God first stuff
shaped into form
and made earth warm—
just warm enough

to unfreeze ice
and not to boil,
but soak, make soil—
wasn't that nice!

All went so well,
all worked, all ran—
but then all fell

into a gloom,
and God made man—
and man went BOOM.

The Seventeenth Century

Men led in that unhealthy age
short lives of feverish endeavor.
Poor old Molière dropped dead on stage.
Now Johnny Carson talks forever.

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EDUCATION

Jeanne Berg

In Loco Parentis

by Laura Rogers

The Brave New Family in Missouri

Many people are concerned about the problems that face our nation today, and the good folks at the Missouri Department of Education are no exception. In an attempt to reverse the decline in enrollment and the high dropout rate, and to win back parental favor for the public school system, Missouri launched an experimental parenting program in 1981. It was then called New Parents as First Teachers, but has since been simplified to Parents as Teachers, or PAT.

Dr. Burton White's Harvard Preschool Project paved the way for the PAT program. "Sending a new parent home with a six-day-old baby as we now do in this country is insane," he asserted at a 1982 education conference. He predicted that future community involvement in his "very unusual project" would reach 80 percent.

In Missouri PAT began as a voluntary pilot project in four school districts at a cost of only $30,000 each. State legislators believed it would help disadvantaged children by screening them for "developmental delays." In 1985 the Missouri Legislature mandated the Parents as Teachers program for all schools and all children. The cost rose to over 9 million dollars and involved 53,000 families.

This program now covers 100,000 children at a cost of fifteen million dollars in tax money, and the January 1990 issue of *Parents as Teachers News*, PAT's monthly bulletin, reports that PAT will be fully implemented "by 1995 or so." Since 1981 PAT has been introduced in 40 states and at least eight foreign countries, and in 1987, the Education Commission of the States announced eight spinoff programs with different names and similar goals. Edward Ziegler, director of the Yale University Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, predicts the future price tag will be from seventy-five to one hundred billion dollars for the total child care package. All that money will go to pay for a program that is revolutionary in its approach to child development and parent involvement.

Much of the strategy behind PAT was laid out at a Governor's Conference on Education held in Kansas in 1989 called "Schools, Goals and the 1990's." At the Kansas Governor's Conference two years earlier Dr. Ziegler stated that "the child care system must become part of the very structure of our society. It must be tied to a known major societal institution." During the 1989 conference Lamar Alexander, president of the University of Tennessee, called for "a brand new American school." These schools are to be open year round for children from birth, and a team of teachers will be assigned to a child from the day that child arrives at the school all the way through college.

Dr. Shirley McCune added definition to what she called the "strategic direction" for American schools. "It seems to me that far too much of our efforts have been focused on the issue of let's find a short term fix and fix up these schools and taking care of them, rather than the issue of understanding that what we're into is a total restructuring of the society. What is happening in America today and what is happening in Kansas and the Great Plains is not simply a chance situation and the usual winds of change. What it amounts to is a total transformation of our society. We have moved into a new era."

Dr. Frank Newman, who is with the Education Commission of the States (and on the national advisory board of PAT), agreed. "We cannot expect these systems to change unless we change the basic policies that surround them. That means for example that new teachers entering the profession must come in from higher education and teacher education programs as change agents."

To the Missouri taxpayer, the goals of PAT may be more obscure.

The process begins when a "parent educator," through home visits and school visits, bonds herself to a family. The January 1990 issue of *Parents as Teachers News* reports that the "purpose of these visits is to help the parents feel more comfortable about leaving their child at the center. Because the parent-teacher relationship begins in the home, parents see the teacher and the center as more responsive to their needs and to the needs of their baby."

Once that bond between parent educator and the biological parent is established, the children and parents are eased into school programs that deliver a battery of services. First, under the guise of education screening, parents and children are evaluated, the child is given a personal computer code number, and a computer record is initiated that will enable Missouri to track each child for the rest of his life. All of the twelve computer code definitions label the children "at risk." If children don't fit in the first eleven "at risk" categories, they automatically fall into the twelfth category PAT calls "Other—That Wonderful Catch All." There is no code for normal.

The next step of the PAT program is to change and usurp the relationships parents have with their children. The

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change agent, the "significant other," will be working with the children in a "mentoring program" or perhaps as a "certified parent educator." This new "certified parent educator" delivers free medical care, free nutrition counseling, free mental health services, and free food—all things formerly provided by the parents.

As time goes on children spend more time at school than at home. Services are increased. The parents discover that the schools will provide free daycare, free overnight care, and free camps, as well as free education.

All these free services come, however, at the price of sometimes significant interference in family life. One young mother, Gabrielle Copp, reports that she was outraged at the arrogance of the "state certified parent," who told her husband he could not spank their children. When her husband would not agree the parent educator tried to get Gabby to side with her against him. The Copps are withdrawing from the PAT program.

Family advice is strongly discouraged not only by the parent educators but by a PAT-distributed booklet entitled *What Now? A Practical Guide for Parents with Young Children* by M.S. Linebarger and R.N. Bonebrake. "Ignoring information offered by a grandparent or relative is sometimes difficult," they write. "Family members often have the parent and child's best interest at heart, but too many suggestions can make the new parent feel incompetent or even feel like a failure. The new parent needs to learn to make decisions independently and not depend on others for advice."

As Nida Clayton writes (she is a mother of five who has recently left the PAT program), "In light of these statements I find it very interesting that [Linebarger and Bonebrake] go on for the next three paragraphs to advise new parents to read parenting manuals . . . and books on child rearing and participate in educational programs provided by mental health centers, health departments, the Division of Family Services, and their local Parents as First Teachers." The goal is, clearly, not to encourage the parents to make independent decisions, because they might make wrong decisions (such as the decision to spank their children). The goal is to undercut the extended as well as immediate family, so that the parents depend on the state support system, whose experts know so much better what it is children need.

Some parents may object to the new goals of the change agents in the school. However, the parent educator isn't responsible to the parent but to the state. In the state of Missouri PAT is also called a child abuse prevention program, and the parent educator is also a child abuse investigator, one of whose jobs is to create abuse statistics. Missouri law (and similar laws are in effect throughout the United States) requires that "mandated reporters" report to the child abuse hotline anything they "suspect" might be abuse or neglect. Since the definition of child abuse or neglect is very broad, any subjective determination made by the "mandated reporter"—here the "parent educator"—must be reported to the hotline. Failure to do so is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a $1,000 fine and one year in jail. As a home visitor, PAT's parent educator carries a big club.

For instance, if a child isn't happy at school or acts up, talks too much, or otherwise misbehaves, the "certified parent educator" may prescribe mental health services or perhaps a drug like Ritalin. A booklet distributed widely by the Missouri Division of Family Services states that one reason for a child abuse hotline call is "refusal to take recommended services." If the parent refuses the recommended services, the state can remove the child from the home, place it in a residential treatment center, and force the parent to take psychological counseling for an indefinite period. "Failure to provide" is, even now, a frequent reason for putting children in state approved facilities. Even if the child is allowed to return home, the state may choose to retain legal custody and control.

A couple of years ago I visited 17 DFS offices around the state to question some "mandated reporters" who are child abuse investigators. One of my questions was this: "Just what is child abuse and neglect and how do you define it?" Some officials gave me xeroxed pages from their notebooks and checklists. Each set was different and often conflicted.

One man listed as a risk factor families who are part of a subculture. He couldn't define a subculture. Another said, "We don't have checklists or anything like that." Another gave me a copy of her checklist of "indicators." One said, "I would never tell a parent not to use a belt." Another said, "Whether or not to use a belt is 'a judgment call.'" Still another said, "Any instrument other than the hand is a weapon and that is child abuse."

"There is a state-approved standard of living," said another. But he couldn't tell me what it was, although he said it was "higher now than it used to be." "Having a dirty house or diaper rash is neglect," said another. "Being late for school is an indicator." "Yelling at a child is emotional abuse."

All this attention has a financial motive. Head counts in public schools are essential, because the number of children served determines the funding level. There is a bounty on all living, breathing children. If the Parents as Teachers social workers can get one child into the system and keep him there, funding increases. So adding to the school population becomes a task of primary importance. At the 1982 Missouri Education Conference on the Young Years, Ed Pino, an educator from Denver, declared, "The five to eighteen-year-old market is dead. We should have learned that a long time ago. Basically, we're in the two to five-year-old market. . . . The sooner we latch onto that market, the sooner we won't have to pink-slip teachers, the sooner we won't have to close up any schools because of declining enrollment, and the sooner we will be getting the kids when we need to be getting them." (At this same conference Ritalin-drugged children were put on display. The children were bused to the conference and made to sit on mats on the floor, except when batting beach balls suspended from the ceiling by strings. Attention was called to their sluggish physical and intellectual responses that changed as the drugs wore off and new doses were administered.)

The Parents as Teachers program doesn't wait until a child is two years old. PAT initiates children and parents into the system before a child is born by recruiting pregnant women in prenatal clinics and private doctors' offices. If PAT doesn't capture them there, the Department of Education in

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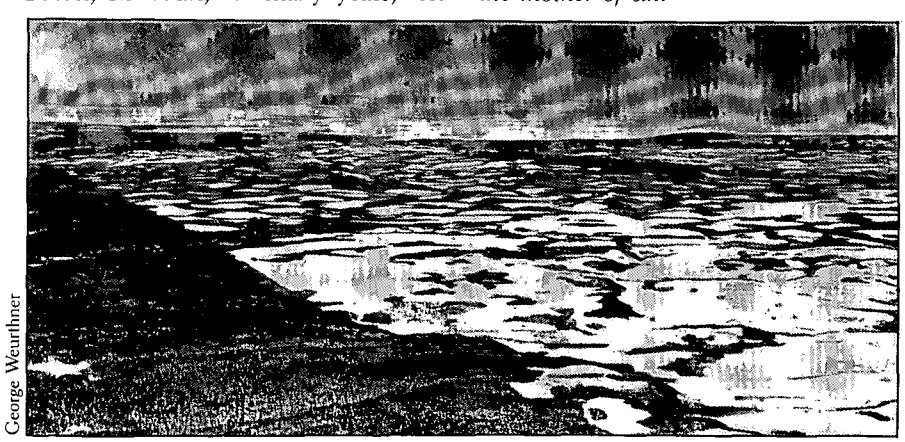
Missouri shows a videotape advertising the program to new parents in the hospital before they take their baby home. In a 1990 *St. Louis Dispatch* article, Mildred Winter of the Parents as Teachers National Center at the University of Missouri at St. Louis said, "Some of our parent educators follow expectant women around the supermarket so they can ask them whether they know about the program."

The federal government isn't the only source of funds. Some of the supporters of the Parents as Teachers program include but are not limited to The Ford Foundation, The Carnegie Foundation, The Danforth Foundation, New World Foundation, Edna McConnell-Clark Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Pet Corporation. There are also The A.P. Green Foundation, The Kansas City Association of Trusts and Foundations, Maritz, Inc., The Monsanto Fund, Don Orscheln, The Powell Family Foundation, and The Speas Foundation. In Missouri we check off a little box when filing income tax directing money to The Children's Trust Fund, another means of funding.

Other federal monies come through the Handicap Law, also known as P.L. 94-142. It may be in the interest of a "certified parent educator" to identify a normal child with the "newspeak" label "developmentally delayed" to initiate the flow of these funds. So should we be shocked that teachers admit the fact that certain tests are rigged to show that up to 75 percent of the normal population of children are abnormal? (Davis Gillam, a teacher who ran the "handicapped" education program in Potosi, Missouri, for many years, left the system last year because her conscience would not allow her to continue to brand normal children as "developmentally delayed.") Or that a Missouri Department of Education publication reveals that social workers may choose to "rate selected aspects of the child's social development" without any public accountability for the results?

Parents as Teachers won't be fully implemented until 1995. Until then, the Parents as Teachers program is using "nice grandmothers from local churches"—as Missouri Secretary of State Roy Blunt put it—for home visits and screening, while certified educator parents are being trained at the Danforth Foundation's Teachers Preservice Institute. The Institute is recruiting people already working in child care centers to accredit them as "certified parent educators," who will soon take over the program. They will also assume for many families the primary parenting role. As Carolyn Warner, the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, told the *Arizona Herald* in 1975, "Those who educate are more to be honored than those who bear the children. The latter gave them only life, the former teach them the art of living."

Laura Rogers lives in St. Charles, Missouri, where she founded the St. Charles Christian School, which operated for twenty years. She was a lobbyist for the Missouri home school law, which has been used as a model nationally, is a Moore Foundation research associate, and is the mother of six.



George Weurthner

The clearcuts on Forest Service land are evident here at the border of Yellowstone National Park and the Targhee National Forest in Idaho.

COMMONWEAL

Jeanne Berg

Restoring Island Park

by John Baden, Ramona Marotz-Baden, and Ron Cooper

A Public/Private Trust for Wilderness Management

The great Yellowstone caldera, home to Old Faithful and Mammoth Hot Springs, last exploded some 600,000 years ago. With a power more than one thousand times greater than Mt. St. Helen's, it threw boulders the size of Greyhound buses nearly to Kansas. Pressure is building up again. The Yellowstone caldera is bulging in preparation for another explosion, which will probably occur sometime between tomorrow and fifty thousand years from now.

In the meantime, we have the task of repairing damage of another sort—that brought about by an agency of the United States government, the Forest Service, in the western boundary area of Yellowstone Park. Restoration ecology provides the tools.

The Island Park caldera area of Fremont County, Idaho, has trophy trout rivers and spectacular views of the Grand Tetons. Unfortunately, the natural beauty of this area is being despoiled at taxpayer expense. Americans are subsidizing the destruction of an increasingly cherished environment.

Beginning in 1961, increasing in the 70's, and accelerating to unsustainable levels during the 80's, the Forest Service

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liquidated the timber resources of Island Park. Their justification was a pine bark beetle infestation. The Forest Service deviated from a stated policy of sustained yields and increased timber harvest levels to upwards of 76 million board feet of timber per year—levels far in excess of what the area can grow on a sustained basis. And as clear-cut areas grew, the micro-climate of the area changed.

The trees of the entire Island Park area east of the Snake River and up to the Yellowstone Park boundary have been liquidated. One result has been a great decline in the wildlife population. Fremont County once had the longest continuous elk hunting season in Idaho. For a hundred years this elk hunt was characterized by trophy bulls and healthy cows. As clearcutting swept the area, the season was shortened. Then, as logging continued, the harvesting of cow elk was prohibited. What had been a 44-day hunting season in the 1960's has become a five-day hunt for bulls only, with a disproportionate share of those bulls being less than breeding age. As logging draws to a close, even these restrictions may be inadequate. The bull-to-cow ratio, which measures overall population health, continues to decline. There are, essentially, no resident herds in the Island Park area. The elk being shot are migrants from Yellowstone Park.

Trees grow best in warm, moist places with low elevations and long growing seasons. Island Park, however, is at a high elevation characterized by hot, dry, short summers and long cold winters. There is little that can be done to stimulate the low timber productivity of the Targhee National Forest, or, for that matter, of any forest in the Yellowstone region.

The excessive timber harvest in Island Park has severely depressed the ecological values of the whole area. While it provided a short-term boost in timber jobs, the long-term economic base of many of the county's residents has been harmed. The artificial twenty-million-dollar-per-year timber industry now faces collapse. By accessing increasingly marginal timber and accepting greater environmental damage, Island Park's two major mills can remain in operation for a few more years. The stud mill in St. Anthony, which consumed lodgepole pine at a voracious rate to make 2x4's, is likely to close within the year. The major dimension lumber mill in Rexburg, 15 miles farther south, has only a few more years to go. Likewise, continued emphasis on large mills could doom the far more labor intensive house log industry and smaller mills of the area.

If the region is to prosper, other economic activities must be pursued. Fortunately, the expanding interest Americans have in high quality natural environments and outdoor recreation provides a potential economic opportunity. Nearby West Yellowstone, Montana, has a history similar to Island Park's, but enjoys prosperity based upon the natural environment. This success story provides both hope and a model for applying restoration ecology.

Starting just after World War II and through the late 1960's, West Yellowstone's economy was dominated by timber. Unprocessed logs were shipped as far as the upper Midwest to be made into paper. But as in the Island Park area, the extensive timber harvests could not be sustained. When a local mill was consumed by fire, the company decided against rebuilding, at least partially because of the inadequacy of the long-term timber supply.

Today, West Yellowstone has largely abandoned timber as a base for its economy. The community has found it can prosper by emphasizing resource protection, rather than resource extraction.

West Yellowstone has become a successful gateway community to Yellowstone Park as well as a recreational center in its own right. The area has capitalized on the growing enthusiasm of Americans for wild trout by becoming a world-class center for fly-fishing. Recently the North American Trout Foundation moved its headquarters to West Yellowstone, drawing thousands of anglers to its annual convention. In the winter thousands more visit the area to go snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. The American Dog Derby races held in Ashton from 1921 through the late 1940's have moved to West Yellowstone. These activities have given it one of the most robust economies in the region.

Therein lies the economic opportunity for Island Park and adjacent areas. The rapidly changing cultural and economic trends in America that have helped West Yellowstone can also help southern Idaho. As Americans become increasingly concerned about the quality of their environment, their appreciation grows for places where the natural environment is healthy and intact. Eastern Idaho offers numerous opportunities to meet this growing interest. But the ecological restoration of Island Park is critical to its transition to a sustainable and environmentally protective economy.

To be effective, environmental restoration efforts must link ecological concerns with appropriate incentives. The bifurcated management of the Forest Service and the National Park Service has threatened both the environment and the economic health of the region. In addition, federal land management allows little meaningful local involvement in decisions affecting both the ecological and the economic health of the region.

Current federal land management is based upon political calculations decoupled from any long-term considerations. We need new institutional arrangements providing strong incentives to act responsibly towards the environment while pursuing economic interests. Businesses that depend upon scenic beauty, wildlife, and clean air and water are more likely to consider the short- and the long-term effects on the region's ecological resources than are federal agencies that depend upon congressional appropriations.

With the proper type of stewardship arrangements, even mining, extraction, energy, and timber harvests can be made compatible with the long-term maintenance of environmental quality. Such a stewardship must recognize that decisions made in a political arena far removed from the region tend to be made in accord with political expedience and perceived acceptability. Thus political decisions fail to consider either the ecological or economic considerations critical to long-term vitality of a region. We must remove management decisions from the realm of special interest politics, with its inherent bias toward the short term.

One such management solution for the Island Park area is the creation of the Island Park Ecological Endowment Board. The proposed Ecological Endowment Board is a public, nonprofit corporation with a trustee responsibility

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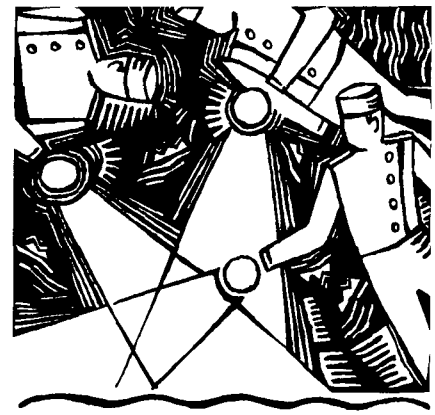
for restoration of the area. It would have the obligation to manage in a manner that enhances the ecological integrity of the area while providing opportunities for sustainable businesses.

Think of this board as a public interest foundation representing both local and national interests. It would build on more than eight hundred years of common law experience with trust relationships involving colleges, hospitals, and museums, extending this well-established framework into a new ecological arena. (Local and national land trusts such as the Nature Conservancy have already provided a model for restoring abused ecosystems like Island Park.) This new management would operate under a congressional directive. It would combine elements of the new federalism embodied in the Northwest Power Planning Act, and a board of trustees such as that responsible for overseeing the Smithsonian Museum and Colonial Williamsburg.

America's Founding Fathers and our first foreign chronicler, Alexis de Tocqueville, well understood that no single set of institutional arrangements is appropriate for all tasks. Profit and loss oriented corporations, by their very nature, give their managers incentives to discount costs and benefits not immediately reflected on the balance sheet. Elected politicians and governmental bureaucrats are notoriously shortsighted and provincial in their outlook, discounting results beyond the next election and impacts outside their jurisdiction. But the nonprofit public interest corporation we propose, the Island Park Ecological Endowment Board, can be carefully designed to avoid incentives that give rise to the above pathologies and to maximize the restoration of Yellowstone's ecological heritage.

John Baden is chairman of the Foundation for Research in Economics and the Environment in Bozeman, Montana, and Seattle. Ron Cooper works for The Wilderness Society in Bozeman, and Ramona Marotz-Baden teaches at Montana State University.

FILM



Jeanne Berg

Playing With Wickedness

by David R. Slavitt

Henry and June
Screenplay by Philip Kaufman and Rose Kaufman
Directed and produced by Philip Kaufman
Released by Miramax

Tune in Tomorrow
Screenplay by William Boyd
Directed by Jon Amiel
Produced by John Feidler and Mark Tarlov
Released by Cinecom Entertainment

Reversal of Fortune
Screenplay by Nicholas Kazan
Directed by Barbet Schroeder
Produced by Edward R. Pressman and Oliver Stone
Released by *Warner Brothers*

There is a certain rightness to the way it turned out, with *Henry and June* being the first movie to get the new "NC-17" rating (which means that no children under the age of 17 are admitted, parents or guardians or no). But any grown-ups above the age of 22 or so should be warned away, which leaves the film with a very narrow spectrum for its tepid appeal. There is lots of writhing and lots of declamation, and we are reminded in both instances how sublimely stupid Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin were. Legends, admittedly, but their actual accomplishments were miniscule, just as their ruttings seem now diminished by the passage of time. Flower children *avant la lettre*, they spent a great deal of energy posturing and, in a weird way, were successful at it. Posturing, as Andy Warhol was later to demonstrate, can outweigh achievement and is eleven points in publicity's law. Miller and Nin were in the right place at the right time, with just the right dopey earnestness to take in those literary journalists whose mistakes became the historians' truths. The books of both were dreary and their lives were impossibly tedious.

I found myself, therefore, admiring *Henry and June* for the first twenty minutes or so. Fred Ward's Henry Miller is impressively crude and lunkheaded. He and his wife (Uma Thurman is June Miller) speak with a heavy Brooklyn accent that makes their goofy comments even goofier: "You were supposed to be a Dusty Yevsky!" she complains, and I thought it was hilarious and that the movie was distancing itself from its subject—a bold, unusual, and therefore interesting thing to do. But that expectation of mine turns out to have been either delusional or else they toyed with it and then gave it up for the surer rewards of a quasi-respectable or at least pretentious soft-core romp. Soft-core pornographers have better sense, though, and don't intersperse their gropings with long sequences that attempt to make interesting what is clearly the most boring human activity in the universe to watch—somebody typing. We see Henry Miller typing what will one day become *Tropic of Cancer*, and we watch him do this with his hat on, his hat off, his ashtray empty, and his ashtray full. We see him pull a sheet of paper out of the typewriter and read it with dissatisfaction; we see him flick a large cockroach off the top of a pile of completed manuscript pages; we see him pull another sheet of paper out and read this page with pleasure (which page, we wonder, might this have been?).

Every two or three hours I would look at my watch to see that another few minutes had elapsed. Without the pressures of censorship—which is what gave the Tropics an almost purely extrinsic interest—there is precious little left. Stupid remarks about writing and art do not justify or redeem even

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stupider behavior, and it is unfair that we are being so severely punished now for their old peccadillos. Without the censorship then, their books would have been forgotten; without the more recent tizzy over the ratings (R? X? or the new NC-17), the film about them would not have been worth talking about.

Martin Loader in *Tune in Tomorrow* wants to go to the imaginary and ideal Paris "of Hemingway and Henry Miller," but in this film, dreams and delusions are not irrelevant. Indeed, the impressions we have from art and culture and the way those impressions shape our lives become the subject of the movie. It's a funny, boisterous, energetic film with Peter Falk at the very top of his form as a kind of *louche* embodiment of art. The dangerousness to which Henry Miller aspired, Falk's Pedro Carmichael actually manages to suggest—he goes from one radio station to another and seems to leave them all literally in flames. He is outrageous, manipulative, exploitive, shameless, and none too fastidious in his toilette, but he is fervent in his commitment to his calling: "Life is a s--t-storm," he says to his young friend, Martin Loader, "and when it's raining s--t, your best umbrella is art."

"Mario Vargas Llosa" has been translated to "Martin Loader," as Lima has been translated to New Orleans. The film will be released in Canada and Europe under the novel's name, *Aunt Julia and the Screenwriter*, but evidently nobody reads books in America and the reference was thought to be obscure and an impediment. Still, the connection between public, popular culture and private behavior remains the subject of the piece. There are some plot difficulties—complications about getting married that made sense in the novel, set in Peru, are totally mangled and incoherent in the film. But one wants to be indulgent about an enterprise that is, for the most part, so genial and good-spirited. Barbara Hershey allows herself to look just a bit dowdy as the older, somewhat shopworn aunt with whom young Martin falls hopelessly in love. Keanu Reeves is just right as the ingenuous youth whose callow passion she finds, in the end, irresistible. There are also some shrewd and rueful ideas bubbling in the background, and that these ideas do not cripple the fun of the film seems to me altogether agreeable.

Loader/Llosa actually did go off to Paris, seduced as much by the Miller myth as by his "aunt" (actually his uncle's sister-in-law) and, just as she so ruefully warns both in both the novel and the movie, he finally abandoned her for a younger woman—also, as it happens, a relative. Whether Mario/Martin was more victimizer or victim is hard to say, but my inclination always is to be indulgent to those who are entertaining.

Curiously enough, there are also a couple of short sequences in this film in which we see Peter Falk typing—but in the first, at the very opening of the film, there is a bomb about to go off, and we know about it and have seen the ticking suitcase. There is, in fact, a point to the scene, an antiphony that is not merely between the tapping of the keys of the old manual typewriter and the ticking of the bomb's timer, but the larger one of the world of art and the real world, each of them answering the disorders of the other and each of them seething with hatreds and loves. (The second is only a few frames to set up for the real gesture, which is that of Falk dropping forward, exhausted by his labors, onto the typewriter, and the script, utterly spent and utterly believable.)

Tune in Tomorrow addresses the same curious questions and with something of the same playfulness as Nikita Mikhalkov's truly splendid *A Slave of Love* (1978), about the Russian Revolution that, as it made its way down to the Crimea, took on the extravagant, almost cartoon style of the silent movies the Russian film industry was then grinding out there. The Mikhalkov piece (available on videotape) isn't merely witty but profound and even frightening, and there is a kind of ballast to the film in that real people were dying, albeit in a stylized way. The violences of *Tune in Tomorrow* are not so convincing as they might have been, had the moviemakers kept the Peruvian setting intact. South American politics is a continuing comedy of blood, after all. The anti-Bolivian jokes of the novel are turned into altogether arbitrary hatreds here, first of Alaskans, then Albanians, and then, indicated at the end, of Norwegians. But the conviction of the scriptwriter has been explicitly stated—"Hate burns, like love!"—and it is not enough to have whimsically conceived hatreds of "safe" exotic groups. This film avoids messiness and risk and even congratulates itself for its harmlessness. "But why Albanians?" Loader asks, and Carmichael looks at him and asks, "Why not?" It's okay for the moment but won't stand. It is like Hemingway's taking out all the pinko stuff from *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, leaving as the only explanation of the hero's allegiance the joke about his family always having been Republicans.

Reversal of Fortune does take some real risks and show some real hatred—and it suggests a level of corruption and menace that is positively invigorating. Jeremy Irons as Claus von Bülow is grandly wicked and beautifully dressed (indeed, the costumes seem after a while the necessary attire of evil). Glenn Close is Sunny and is as riveting as any character in a vegetative state has ever been on film. There is a scene in this movie in which Sunny is being bathed by a couple of nurses who are washing her thighs—she has become an object, as indeed she probably always was to Claus. But then these people had a ruthlessness that turns people into objects, worth space on life's étagère or not. The movie suggests that the Kantian idea that every person is an end in himself is turned arsy-varsy by such absurd degrees of wealth.

Probably, this is unfair. The opening sequence is a breathtaking aerial view of Newport "cottages," and few of the families in the other houses have made headlines bumping one another off. Still, whether it is objectively true or not, the mythology is clear that money in large quantities has some corrosive effect on the spirit. The movie takes this to a logical conclusion in which everyone becomes a means, a thing that is either attractive or not, entertaining and decorative or not. The good taste turns ruthless and oppressive and becomes—in a startling reversal of the old Calvinist idea—an outward sign of an inward state of gracelessness.

There is no answer to the question of Von Bülow's guilt or innocence, although in one sequence we get a plausible guess as to what is likely to have happened—that Claus tried to

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kill Sunny, dragging her into the bathroom and opening the window so she might freeze to death, abetting the suicide she had already initiated and entirely convinced that he was doing what she wanted. It was what he wanted too, of course, more money being always better than less. Von Bülow's attorney, Alan Dershowitz, believes in his client's innocence, and has suggested that, had Von Bülow done it this way, there would have been fingerprints (in his own bathroom? Of course, but irrelevant). What is irrefutable is that Sunny's children by her first marriage (to Prince von Augsberg) tried to frame him, convinced that he'd done it and not wanting Von Bülow to profit by his crime. This is the legal question that attracted Dershowitz—whether rich people can just hire private guns to collect and turn over evidence, perhaps suppressing or even inventing what they think is harmful or useful.

But the courtroom drama is only the framework on which the intricate canvas depicting privilege and corruption is stretched. Ron Silver does a creditable Dershowitz (lapsing only at times into something like Snuffy Smith). Irons deserves an Oscar nomination for the thin-lipped, blue-blooded, elegant creep he has invented. What gives the portrayal—and the film too—a last irresistible twist is the humor. At one point, at a Chinese dinner for Dershowitz's legal team, Von Bülow asks what is a fear of insulin and then gives the answer: "Claus-trophobia." There is a quick, sick grin, which is shocking. We have the eerie sense that to Von Bülow, his own life has become a thing, an *objet d'art* if not *virtu*. And a macabre and frightening thing it is, at that.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist who lives in Philadelphia.

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Jeanne Berg

Education in an Age of Haste

by Leo Raditsa

A Class Day Speech

Not much more than 24 hours ago, one of many of you who could get away with it asked me to speak to you on Class Day. It hit me that for a tutor who insists on students meeting deadlines, the situation has the best of comic myth: you got yours back, and at the same time gave me an honor whose sweetness I can taste.

You will, as you grow taller, stronger in yourself and deeper, realize the sweetness of the love that has surrounded you here. It is strange how love in the past, the love of the past, can reach you in the present, how twenty years later you can feel the love of teachers you took for granted and did not recognize at the time, proof, if any such is needed, that the past has its own life, that it really does live in us and beyond us, perhaps more so in the West than anywhere else.

For the West is the civilization that remembers the most, and most accurately—the reason you should learn Greek and Latin. At the same time, in fits of inconsequence, it wants to destroy that past, to do away with it, to wipe it out, to act as if we came from nowhere, had no parents, had no name.

As it is, we do not know what to do with our names. They seem like conventions from another time, an embarrassment, something we have inherited and do not know what to do with. But the real point is inheritances have to be earned, and earning them takes the better part of a lifetime, perhaps a whole lifetime.

When I look at the generation of my grandfather, roughly the generation after Freud, the generation that saw the First World War (still an event nobody understands), what hits me is their robust self-confidence, their confidence in their goodwill, goodwill we cannot even imagine. We distrust ourselves, and that is the reason we are so easily euphoric, especially in the face of disaster that would have lighted severe recognition in the eyes of our ancestors, and also weeping. They never forgot the whips and arrows of fortune. That is why their goodwill was almost childlike—not infantile or immature, but only the child in the man, the most important part of the man, because it gives life to all the rest, or allows the rest to live and breathe.

A teacher of mine used to say (not to me, for it is not a thing a teacher says to a student): *La sagesse fait durer, la passion fait vivre*. Passion here probably does not mean suffering but rapture, that rapture you live first as a child, and probably most disinterestedly then.

The thing that tells most about our lack of self-confidence is our haste, the haste with which we read books—maybe I should speak for myself—the haste almost of a glutton, unseemly, or of a libertine, of a Don Giovanni of print: you don't need so much baggage to get through.

This haste is a little like Mary McCarthy arriving in Hanoi in wartime with 17 suitcases, her little mark in history. I suppose we do not want to travel light because we do not want to travel at all. But our world is not a place that allows anybody to stay at home much, and if you do stay at home you are likely to see people come and take your home away from you. You will probably have to fight for somebody else before you can fight for yourself, especially in America, whose very Constitution seems to deny since the Civil War that we have anything of our own that somebody else cannot also claim.

A wise lady who has lived a lot and seen a lot told me yesterday that she

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thought the United States was probably trying to do something impossible. Trying to do the impossible means, often, evasion, for it keeps you from the possible, from savoring what you have.

She was replying to a remark of mine that in some sense Europe was one culture and many peoples, and the United States wanted to be one people and many cultures, Europe inside-out. The general bafflement at the difference between Europe and the United States shows up in some of the current talk about "the unity of Europe," a phrase that makes little sense except in terms of trade. The Europeans know or sense these differences but do not dare talk about them, a mark of the extent of their Americanization.

As far as I can tell, this combination of one culture and many peoples has occurred in history only in Europe, and is the reason for European expansion throughout the world. Its basis was laid in the Roman Republic and Empire, but its greatest test and triumph came after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 A.D., when it continued to spread and survive among the conquering barbarians in part because of Christianity.

In some sense the Romans found their greatest expansion after their political fall, and this expansion took place beyond their frontiers, roughly the Rhine-Danube. At the same time the breakdown in Roman authority, first in the civil wars that destroyed the Republic and then in the fall of the Empire, is still felt today. For the spread of one culture did not bring political unity. In fact it seemed to depend on the avoidance of political unity, a secret Rome did not know, and one that caused many tragedies.

The source of this strength to spread beyond the boundaries of nations and kingdoms comes from the capacity this culture has to say it was wrong and to repent. The readiness to acknowledge that one is wrong existed in Rome and Greece also. Socrates understood this, and more importantly could bring other people to acknowledge their mistakes. He knew that was the way to strength, in contrast to force—he also knew it was very dangerous. The willingness to admit wrong persisted in Rome in the institution in politics of always hearing two sides of an argument, an institution that perhaps did not survive the fall of the ancient world. Christianity is not so clearheaded about choice. This ambiguity, even ambivalence, about choice makes us think a great deal about tolerance, something the ancients took so for granted they did not have the words for it. We do not in our politics argue the other side of an issue as a matter of course, in part because even when we do not agree, we tend to want to think there is only one way. "The only alternative" we call it, an oxymoron.

But the readiness to acknowledge one is wrong came to be the center of our institutions not so much because of Socrates and the Romans but because of the readiness of David to acknowledge and repent his murder of Uriah. Here it was not only a man, an individual like Socrates, saying he was wrong, but also a king. You can see the traces of this act in many places, among them the second part of *Marbury* v. *Madison*, where the precedents for recourse

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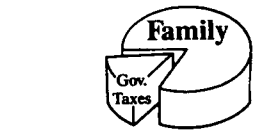

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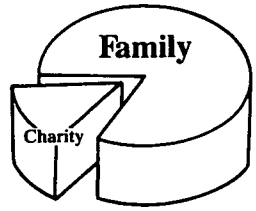

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against the sovereign (some of them) are remembered.

This readiness not only of individuals but of public authority to say it was wrong is at the heart of respect for opposition, probably the most accurate measure of freedom in a country. It has also made possible the independence of the judiciary, an institution that decisively separates the modern from the ancient world, as Montesquieu first realized. Kingship too marked the difference between the ancient and modern world, as Montesquieu also pointed out, when he said there was no comparison between the European kings and the ancient, only the word appeared the same.

It is this readiness of authority itself and the institutions it has brought about, to say they are wrong, that puts us in a culture in which our institutions and our public ways are better than ourselves — than some of us at least — and allows us, and encourages us, to do things we would hardly dare on our own. That many of us still do not dare despite their encouragement and permission is one reason for our pervasive restlessness and even resentment. For our way of life makes us often feel we could be better than we are, by offering us more than we can cope with.

I suspect you have felt this in your four years here, riches everywhere, more than you could take in, and also something like a sense that they belonged to somebody else because you did not know how to make them yours. There is also something that makes it doubly hard to make books your own when you read them in school. Assigned reading is perhaps more accurate, more objective, but you do not feel the full brunt of the work the way you do when you read a book on your own, when the reading is passionate.

But the more books are important to you, the more you also have to know how to get along without them. In some way you get along without them by letting them become a part of you, so much so that you only recognize their presence in you years later when you read them again. In some sense the mark of their presence in you is the feeling that you have forgotten everything you have read, and never really read anything properly. I suspect that a good many of you had read important books on your own before you came here, and came here because of that, because you did not know what to do with their life in you.

Finally, the test of a tradition lies in your readiness to imitate and continue it. It is also the test of your education. In some way almost everything you do will continue it, to the extent that it is institutionalized in the professions, political life, etc. But even in such ways of life you will have to rediscover it, and also make it new, for the oldest things in our civilization are the newest, the things that will surprise you most, and, in some instances, the things that will seem most different, almost inconceivable. These days — I mean the last thirty years, a generation — we are scared of those surprises, for they awaken a dread almost as deep as the assurance they occasion, and which occasions them, so that we are willing to settle for all sorts of absurd nonsense, to distract us from what we are all about, from the things and accomplishments that will really take our breath away.

You cannot simply decide one day you will imitate the tradition and start the next, for the same reason that you cannot decide to fall in love: you can only allow it to happen. It is a slow journey in which the steps you have to take are not obvious, harder these days perhaps than before, because there are fewer teachers with the assurance to guide you and above all to limit you. But assured teachers also take years to outgrow, for their tradition cannot be entirely yours, and the limits that really count are the ones that you give yourself.

Imitating the tradition means daring to learn from works, imitating the way they do things, not repeating their thought. Some of this goes on without your notice, and has been going on already without your notice. But the more you grow in it, the more you really do it, the more will the imitation have to be conscious, and the more anxiety and doubt it will occasion. The only confidence I know of comes from enduring that doubt, which will grow intenser the closer you are to doing something.

What I am saying is that the way to really be on your own is to imitate the tradition, not to flee it. The challenge is to find the way to do that, and the difficulty is that the way finally has to be your own, a way nobody else could have taken, but at the same time cannot be your own unless it has a firm relation to what went before. The deeper its relation to the past, the more it will be your own. This paradox is the reason why masterpieces appear both totally new, without one word misplaced, as if they were written effortlessly and involuntarily in a flood of love, and at the same time seem to be the obvious next step after what came before. But my experience is that this time, the years since 1917, dreads most what is its own; or, to put it better, dreads having something of its own.

Leo Raditsa teaches at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

LIBERAL ARTS

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In October there was more than one complaint about the cut of itemized deductions, which would prevent taxpayers in states with high state taxes from deducting those taxes on their federal form. Representative Thomas J. Dewey, a Democrat from Suffolk County on Long Island, told a reporter that "I think it stinks. You are going to make New York and Long Island a less attractive place to live."

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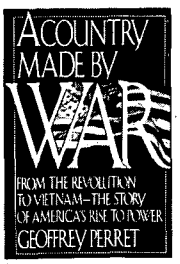

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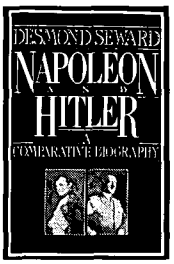

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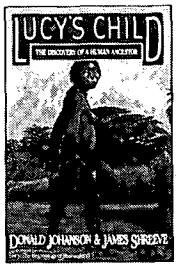

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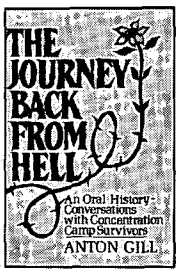

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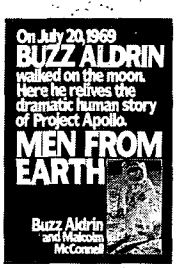
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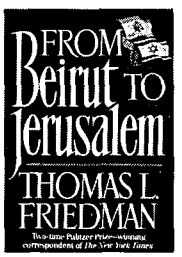

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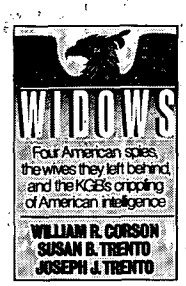
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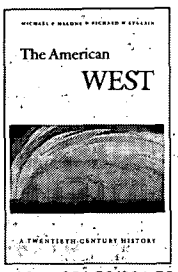
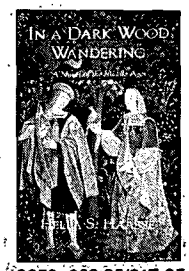
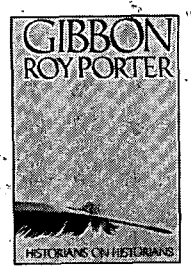


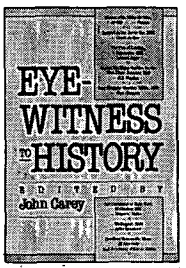
2675. $31.50/**$21.50**



2659. $22.95/**$17.95**

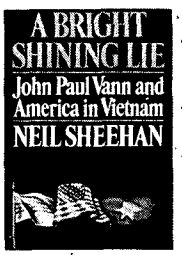


2022. $24.95/**$18.95**

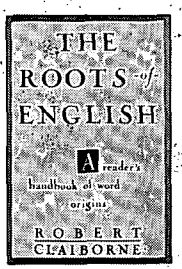


6007. $24.95/**$17.95**

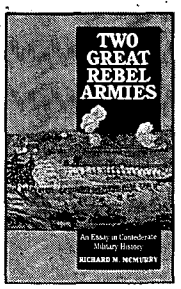
7526. $17.95/**$15.50**



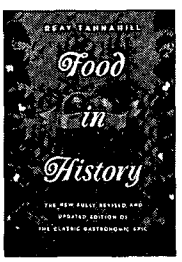
1495. $24.95/**$18.50**



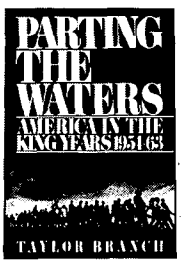
1933. $18.95/**$15.95**



9282. $22.50/**$16.95**

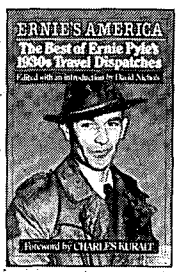


2410. $19.95/**$16.95**



1081. $24.95/**$18.95**

2261. $18.95/**$15.50**



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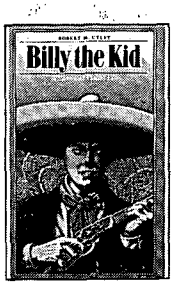
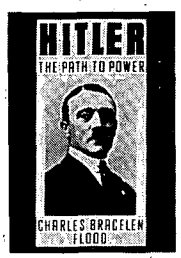


1792. $22.95/**$18.50**



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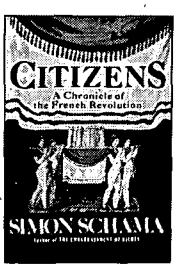
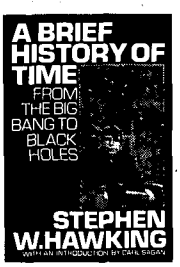


1396. $29.95/**$21.95**



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